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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[MAURICE MONTGOMERY FOLLOWED THE HUMBLE BLACK-BORED FIGURE INTO THE PARK.]

KIT.

CHAPTER VII.

SIR PHILIP DESMOND was extremely disappointed, when he called at the Limes, to find no trace of his little witch anywhere. He inquired for her almost immediately of Constance, as they sauntered to and fro on the lawn under the trees.

"Oh, Kit! I believe she is somewhere in the gardens. Shall we try and find her, or is it too hot?"

"I don't feel the sun," Sir Philip said, frankly. He had travelled in foreign parts so much, heat was nothing to him; "but it is a different thing for you."

He glanced, as he spoke, at her delicate beauty. She certainly was extremely pretty, so fair and so gentle.

The thought passed through his mind that she would make a charming wife for some man, not for himself. He had no intention of marrying, and Constance, though he admired her, was not altogether sympathetic to him.

He had a keener sense of interest in her at this moment than he had as yet experienced.

She was so graceful, and he approved of the way she wore her hair. Her beauty was of the conventional stamp that pleased in a mild manner, but was not calculated to inspire any enthusiasm whatever.

"I think I see a way out of the difficulty," Constance said.

She beckoned to a gardener to come across the lawn towards them, and then inquired if Miss Kit were anywhere to be found.

"I see'd her goin' through the meadow wi' the young squire, Miss Constance, a good two hours ago now or more."

Constance dismissed the man with her most gracious manner, and then laughed,—

"Ah! I see now why she is not here. Some wild excursion with her inseparable friend, young Chris Hornton."

"The boy who was at the garden party yesterday and looked so unhappy?" Sir Philip said, smiling at his recollection of Chris's melancholy face.

"The same." Constance sank into a chair, and Sir Philip followed her example and took

another. "He and Kit are bosom friends, have the most mysterious adventures together. I don't know what they will do when they are separated."

"And is that inevitable?" Philip Desmond could not have well analysed the feeling that prompted him to discuss the small events and interests of this girl's life.

"Oh! I am afraid so. Lady Hornton has set her heart on Chris going to the bar. One cannot quite conjecture what the result of this is likely to be, for Chris does not strike one as a brilliant boy; but we must make allowances for maternal pride!"

"The most pardonable pride in the world," Sir Philip said, with a smile. "And so Miss Kit is to lose her ohm? Poor child! no doubt she will suffer a good deal, our early griefs are always so hard to bear."

"Kit is not such a baby," Constance observed. Any one skilled in understanding her face would have seen she was fretting beneath some annoyance. Indeed, this persistence with which Sir Philip Desmond would discuss Kit was absolutely objectionable to Constance, and irritated her almost beyond

endurance. "She is eighteen or nineteen, I almost forget which!"

"So much!" Sir Philip exclaimed; "why, I took her for a child. She will be coming out directly, then, I suppose?"

Constance bent to rearrange her skirts, her cheek flushed a little.

"Not immediately," she answered, and all at once an idea came to her, a veritable inspiration. "In fact, my mother has determined that Kit must have at least one year at a good school before she makes her debut in the world. She really needs it, for she has been given so much freedom she has grown up almost like a wild thing; and, you know, Sir Philip," with a pretty assumption of maternity, "how badly the world understands unconventionality, and how hardly our poor little Kit would fare if she were allowed to mingle with it in her present untrammelled mental state!"

"Why should she go into the world at all? Why not keep her young, and pure, and fresh all her life? Why let the moth of society eat into her wholesome healthy soul?"

Constance laughed softly, and swayed her foot to and fro.

"You object to a farmer husband, Sir Philip. I am afraid you are hard to please!" He looked round and laughed too.

"The fact is, Miss Marlowe, I am an old-fashioned hulk, and quite behind the times. I never did care for what the world said, and I don't think I ever shall care. I love nature. You understand me, I know, although you probably don't agree with me."

"Ah! but indeed I do," Constance said, quickly and softly.

She seized on anything that would lead the conversation on to general subjects, and eventually he skillfully brought round to more personal ones.

She talked on in her gentle manner, and while she talked she was thinking.

That suggestion of Kit going to school was decidedly very good. It would be the best explanation to give to everyone, and no one would know the truth.

She had no very definite plans as to what Kit should really do; but her brain was fertile, and something would develop before many hours had gone.

One thing was most certain, that Constance was as eager that her cousin should go as that cousin was eager to put an end to her life of dependence and bitterness.

Sir Philip sat chatting a long time. It was very pleasant out under the shade of the old trees, with the scent of the limes wafted to them on the hot air; and Constance was a charming companion. Without being a deep thinker in the faintest sense of the word, as a matter of fact, indeed, being a woman of the most superficial intellect, she nevertheless had some cleverness, and one of her chief claims to this lay in the fact that she could disguise her lack of knowledge in the most acute way, and appear to be something very different to what she really was.

Sir Philip found her an intelligent and pretty person, and by the time he rose to go back to the Priory, Constance felt that she had made a decided step forward in his good opinion.

By to-morrow he will have forgotten Kit's very existence. He only remembers her now because she struck him as being something unconventional and picturesque, and pleased his artistic eye.

Constance could not refrain from a feeling of contempt for the eye that could be so easily pleased; but, on the whole, she was more than satisfied with the result of Sir Philip's visit, and she sat a long time conjuring up possibilities of the future.

She was resolved to accept Lady Sinclair's invitation to go to the Priory.

The opportunities that offered themselves in this visit were too good to be allowed to escape her. But first she must arrange something about Kit.

She sat another hour under the trees,

thinking and thinking, and rose at last with a clear brow and her mind at rest.

She had thought out a plan; and within the next twenty-four hours Kit would be well away from the Limes, and the place that had been her home for so many years.

Kit was sitting perched up on her shabby bed when her cousin knocked at her door. It was after ten, and the moon was shining in through the small narrow window.

Constance took the only chair in the room.

"I have thought of everything—that is if you are still determined to go, Kit."

"I am determined," the girl answered, quietly.

"Have you said anything to Chris Horn-ton?" Constance asked, suddenly.

It would be very awkward if she were to give forth one story of her cousin's absence, and Chris were to furnish another.

Kit shook her head.

"No," she answered.

"Are you sure?" Constance was not easily convinced.

Kit looked at her cousin a little coldly.

"I have told Chris nothing."

Constance made no reply, but unfolded a telegram.

"You have heard me speak of Lady Grace Leith—this telegram is from her. She wrote to me the other day, asking me if I knew of any girl in the country who would be glad to take a situation as a sort of under lady's maid; someone to do sewing and that sort of thing. I told her, when I wrote, I would make inquiries; and I was going to write her again to-day, and tell her I could hear of nothing when—"

Constance stopped, then went on a little hurriedly, "I sent her a telegram this afternoon, telling her that if the place was still vacant, I could send her up someone. Her answer is that she will be glad to receive any one I can recommend thoroughly. I did not tell her who you were, or let her imagine you were my—"

Constance stopped again. Kit had listened in absolute silence, not even moving. She was sitting, hunched up on the bed, her chin in her two hands, and the moonlight falling on her head, and touching her pale thoughtful face.

"Of course," Constance said, coldly, for the girl's beauty was not to be denied in this moment. "Of course, I only put this offer before you. I—"

"You are very kind," the young voice was full of weariness. "I am much obliged to you, Constance."

Constance rustled the telegram to and fro. Now that she had set her mind on Kit's going she was irritated by the girl's subdued manner. Perhaps, after a long day, Kit had thought over things, and had determined to bear with her aunt a little longer! If so, Constance was reassured almost immediately.

"Does Lady Grace say she can receive me soon?" Kit asked.

"To-morrow! Here is her telegram, you can see for yourself."

Kit read the message and gave it back without a word.

"You will want some money of course. I will lend it to you, and you can repay me out of your salary when you get it," Constance said, generously. "There will be your fare to town, and you may, perhaps, have to buy some things. I don't know what clothes you have?"

"I have enough for the requirements of a housemaid," Kit said, quietly, and her words annoyed Constance, though a glance at the girl's face set aside the idea that there was any sneer intended in them.

"You must remember, Kit," she said next, in her coldest fashion, "that this idea of your going out into the world is your own doing. I hope, if trouble comes of it, you will not forget this, and you will not blame me!"

Kit looked across at her cousin.

"I don't think you need say this, Constance. I am never likely to blame you. I shall

always be grateful to you for helping me when I wanted help so badly, and did not know where to find it."

"Then," Constance said, rising, "then you have decided to go?"

"Yes, I have decided to go."

"Shall you tell mamma of your intention?"

Kit's face coloured.

"I will never willingly see your mother again," she answered, very quietly.

"Then you leave it to me to tell her?"

"You may say what you think best."

"And what about Chris?"

"Chris?"

Kit looked up.

"Do you mean to tell him where you are?"

"Shall you write to him?"

Kit shook her head.

"No," she said, sorrowfully. "It is all over between Chris and me now. I shall not write to him. There can be nothing in common between us now;" and then Kit put out her hand, "Thank you Constance. You have been very good to me, I shall not forget it!"

Without you I don't know what I should have done; I could not have got away; and to live on here after—"

She stopped with a shiver. "Ah! it would have been impossible, it would have been worse than death. Good-bye, dear Constance; from to-day we are no longer cousins. I go out of your life. I shall cease to be Katherine Marlowe—I shall be simple Kate Lowe, a woman earning her bread in an honest but humble fashion. Please let me go away very quietly. Say what you like when I am gone. I would not like the truth to be known, not for my sake," rearing her head, proudly, "I shall not be ashamed of my work,—but for your sake and your mother's! If Aunt Helen says harsh things of me, Constance, tell her I am not ungrateful. I shall always remember how she took me in and gave me a home when I was a little child. It is not ingratitude that sends me away now—only the feeling I have lived on here quite long enough. I am not a child now, I am a woman, and I do not desire to be a burden to anyone."

Constance took the hand offered. The girl's absolute dignity, the grace with which she bore herself, the quiet acceptance of a fate, which, though humble, could not humiliate her, aroused once again the flame of Constance's narrow selfish heart. She knew she had stooped to gratify the meanest feelings in seeking such an opening for her cousin as this situation as under-maid. There could have been some other way had she desired to find it, but she had only one desire, to get rid of Kit, and to let her suffer all that was possible in return for the *mauvais quart d'heure* she had been, so unconsciously, the cause of giving to Constance.

They parted with that hand-clasp, and a few words of arrangement for the morrow. If Kit had any yearning for a little womanly sympathy and affection, she let none of it appear in her face. If she had winced at the proposal that Constance had so coldly and calmly laid before her, she made no sign. It was not the help she would have given had she been in Constance's place. But Kit's nature was above all petty feelings; though she had shrunk at first from the new life offered to her, she was none the less grateful to the hand that was stretched out to draw her away from the misery of her present existence.

It had been very very hard to bear often, but never until this day had Mrs. Marlowe let the full bitterness of her dislike have free vent. The sneers that had been often pointed at her dead parents, had never taken the form of horrible insults till now. Had her aunt ever spoken the words before that she had uttered this day, Kit would have sought long ago to have done what which she was now about to do.

She sat far into the night, thinking and thinking. Her face was very sad, and she had as ache in her heart that was inexpressible. With all her sorrows and shadows in this

life she was leaving, there had been joys: her friendship with Chris, which must end now, for ever; an attachment to one or two animals about the place; Hepsie whom, she knew, loved her in her own rough fashion; and a few outside people who had taken an interest in her from the very first: to leave these would be a wrench.

In the case of Chris, she hardly dared let herself think of what pain she would suffer; and, then, beyond and apart from this was the new world that stretched before her. She would be free. She would be independent. Yes! that was almost a happiness; but who could say if she would not meet with even greater sorrow than that she was leaving behind?

Her heart was very full; she had no thought of shirking her determination, yet it was but natural that as she realised absolutely all that had happened and was happening, she should fling herself face forward on the bed, and burst into a passion of tears.

CHAPTER VIII.

CONSTANCE duly made her appearance at the Priory two days later. She excused herself from not having immediately accepted Lady Sinclair's invitation by reason of her mother's illness.

"The fact is," she confided to Lady Sinclair, when they were alone for a moment, "there was a little quarrel between Kit and mamma, and it upset mamma very much. I don't think Kit wanted to go to school; in fact, she said so in her own peculiar fashion, which is not the most polished in the world, and the result was not pleasant!"

Lady Sinclair was never particularly interested in Kit. She had considered her a very plain girl, and then had dismissed her from her mind. However, she was interested now.

"How annoying! I detest quarrels. And what has happened? Has she gone to school?"

"Yes. She went yesterday, poor little Kit. I am afraid she will not be very happy just at first."

"Well, I should think you must be glad to get rid of her," was Lady Sinclair's frank confession. "I know I should be. People with red hair have always got horrid tempers!"

And with that the subject dropped. At lunch, however, Lady Sinclair suddenly addressed Sir Philip. She had a good spice of mischief in her nature, and loved to tease any one.

"So sorry for you, Philip. You may as well pack up your portmanteau. Your beauty has left the neighbourhood!"

Constance, never expecting Lady Sinclair would give the question of Kit a second thought, coloured a little.

Sir Philip looked mystified. He had been discussing some military question with Captain Montgomery, who had left his room for the first time, and, in fact, was given permission to take his departure to town when he liked.

"Beauty! What beauty?" he asked Lady Sinclair.

"Well, you have a good memory! Forgotten your red-haired syren already!"

"Oh!" Sir Philip's face cleared, "you mean Miss Marlowe's little cousin!"

"That lovely little creature who doctored me so well, gone aw—"

Lady Sinclair broke in suddenly,—"What! You too!"

Captain Montgomery looked at her in astonishment.

"I don't know what you mean by 'you too'!" he answered, quickly, a little nettled, for he considered himself a very good judge of most things, female beauty perhaps most of all. "Surely there can be nothing surprising in stating a fact. If Philip's red-haired syren is the same as my little nurse, she is absolutely one of the most beautiful and pictur-

esque creatures I have ever seen or ever wish to see!"

Lady Sinclair looked at the two men with a most comic expression.

"Well, Constance, evidently there is no place for us in the world!"

Constance laughed softly. "Oh! I am quite sure Captain Montgomery could not have meant anything so unflattering as that, Lena."

"Beauty is not confined to one colour or form," Maurice answered, hurriedly, "and I for one can admire it in its myriad shapes."

"I wash my hands of you both," Lady Sinclair cried. "You are both men of very extraordinary and unnatural taste!"

Constance was answering Sir Philip,—"

"Yes, she has gone to school. A series of circumstances arose which made my mother decide on sending her at once. She did not want to go, it was a wrench to her, of course, poor child; but I dare say she will be happy very soon."

"She has gone abroad?" Sir Philip asked, feeling a very slight vague sensation of disappointment stirring his heart, a sensation he was barely conscious of. Constance looked at him with her clear eyes, and answered him with a lie,—"

"Yes, she has gone to Paris!"

Captain Montgomery caught the words.

"To Paris to be finished, and to be spoilt. She will never be the same again. Lady Sinclair, you will be avenged. I shall meet my maiden, with the red-hot hair, walking sedately in the park, very trim and very fashionable, all the grace gone out of her handsome body, and her long locks plained neatly out of sight, and—I shall not even look at her a second time—I shall probably call her plain!"

"Poor girl! what a hard fate!" was Lady Sinclair's answer, given with unconscious sarcasm; and then the subject of conversation was changed, and later in the day Maurice was driven to the station and conveyed back to town.

"You will be coming up soon," he said to Sir Philip, as they parted. "Oh! you must; you can't vegetate here for ever, you know."

"I am perfectly happy!" Sir Philip said, with a smile, "inconceivable as it seems to you; but I must run up for a day or two next week. Perhaps you will have a free night and come and eat a bit of dinner with me."

"I'll try," Captain Montgomery said, and then, as the train rolled away, he sat back and sighed again with relief at the thought of being restored to London and all its joys.

"Shall have to dine with the old boy, I suppose," he said to himself. "Good old sort, Philip, won't do to let him out up rough and let him think he is being neglected, but it's a nuisance all the same. Got nothing in common with a chap, and a bit of a prig too; however, one can't expect too much from a man of his age!"

Sir Philip walked back to the Priory, and was deeply occupied with his thoughts as he went. Despite his observations to Maurice that he was perfectly happy, he felt as though a slight spirit of unrest had come upon him during the last few days—he was a trifle weary of Lady Sinclair's incessant chatter, and of Lord Sinclair's dreamy, hazy, astronomical observations. He could not have quite analysed his feelings. Maybe it had been the presence of Maurice that had worked the slight difference.

Against himself, his sincere affection and admiration for the "boy," there would come occasionally the thought that some day he would experience not only disappointment but pain and trouble through this young man. He had no cause for such a thought, as has already been stated. Maurice Montgomery, so far, had done nothing but win the deepest approval from his mother's friend; still, despite all this, and the fact that Philip was on such terms of intimacy with Mrs. Montgomery and her family, he had to confess he did not really

know Maurice, and these last three days at the Priory had given him an insight into the young man's character such as he had never had before, and such as did not bring pleasure to a nature like his own, honest, honourable, pure, and strong in that purity.

That Maurice should regard him as an old "fogey," only provoked a smile. Sir Philip was the least vain man in the world; but his record of success with the other sex would have considerably astonished and impressed Captain Montgomery could he have known of it in its entirety.

Sir Philip never appeared to care for the society of women, and was generally regarded as a man who would never relinquish one of his bachelor comforts for the uncertain bliss of matrimony.

Sir Philip was not thinking of himself or of what opinion Maurice might hold of him, as he walked along the country; he was thinking, in a dreamy sort of way, that he would do well to start once more on his travels. He had been in England quite a long time for him of late, nearly a year, and he had many a spot to visit in far-off lands.

"There is nothing to keep me," he thought a little sadly. His close ties had been sundered long ago, he had neither sister nor brother, his title would go to some distant cousin in default of no direct heir. He gave a little sigh. His life was after all a lonely one, and, to a heart so big and full of the milk of human kindness as that which he possessed, there were bound to be moments of regret and longing over the joys denied him. By now he might have had tall boys springing up around him, girls with tender clinging arms and loving lips to soften the burden of life and give him happiness.

Ah, well! it was too late to think of that now. It might have been in the long ago, if a woman's treachery and falseness had not turned the light of the sun to darkness, and made tall that was beautiful seem miserable, distorted, and untrue.

His mind went back to the past as he walked on. Suddenly he recognized the road outside the Limes, and the memory of Kit's face came to him. He was a little amused at himself for the effect this child had produced on him. He was keenly alive to all beauty, but he was not a retentive man in this particular respect; he admired the beauty and then forgot it as a rule; but somehow Kit's face, her eyes, those extraordinary eyes, were not to be forgotten.

"I should like to have seen her again; there was soul written in every curve and line. Poor child! I have a sort of presentiment about her. She will not find the world a gentle or a pretty place; I should like to help her. But these are the impossibilities of life; they give one a pleasant moment even in the thinking them so vainly, but there they end."

So dismissing the future with that merciful blindness and ignorance that is part of our nature, Sir Philip passed the Limes, and walked on more briskly till he reached the Priory lawn where Constance sat waiting patiently for his return.

"And her ladyship desires me to say she does not approve of the way you do your hair. You must please brush it straight back, and wear no curls or fringe. And you must always be dressed by two o'clock in your black dress. Her ladyship is much surprised you didn't bring a black gown with you; she always expects that all her maids should wear black, it is usually done in good houses." Here Mrs. Wilson, the housekeeper in Sir George and Lady Grace Leith's establishment paused, and ran her sharp eye over the girl standing before her. She was not at all impressed with her. She thought Miss Marlowe might have sent a more suitable young person than this slender pale-faced Kate Lowe. "I am afraid you don't know much about your work. I forget how long you were in your last situation."

Kit almost smiled.

"I have never been in a situation before," she answered, quietly.

The housekeeper frowned. The girl's voice, her manner, her general appearance was decidedly against her in this working woman's opinion.

"Too much of a lady!" she said to herself. "Shouldn't be surprised if she was born one. Well, that's nothing to me. She's come here as maid, and she must do her proper work, or else go. I can't have no fine ladies about the place." Thereupon she spoke more sharply than before, detailing this particular, and that one, and giving so many directions that Kit's head fairly ached.

"And now you know what you have to do to-day; and this evening you are to go to Miss Sybil's room, and wait up for her till she comes home, and then you are to unlace her bodice and help her to undress; and please remember everything I have told you. And, Lowe," as Kit was moving away, "I think you had better put some pomatum on your hair; her ladyship will not like that staring colour, I am sure."

Kit went away slowly up the stairs to the small room allotted to her for her sewing. There was a smile on her lips, but it was a very sad one, and she had an ache in her heart and in her limbs that made her very weary.

She had been a week in her new life—it had been a long, miserable week. She had not known what it would cost her to leave the place she had called home till she was absolutely away.

She had the one consolation and satisfaction of feeling she was no longer an object of charity, and of her aunt's bitter vulgar scorn. But alas! poor Kit! She had to realize only too truly that independence does not always mean happiness; and she felt to-night, as she toiled up the stairs, that if life were to be always set in this key, she would meet death gladly and without regret.

She was not without courage, but there was so much to learn and to bear. The big house frightened her a little, and the servants, all of whom stared at her as though she were a wild beast.

She had only had one interview with the mistress of the house, in which she could only distinguish a cold voice, a cold face, and a haughty presence.

There was only one daughter unmarried now, and she had been away until this day. To-night Kit was to take up her proper duty as maid to Sybil Leith, and the child began to tremble with nervousness and dread as she thought of this.

She was afraid of the girl upon whom she was to wait, she was afraid of everybody. She sat sewing till late in the afternoon; then, when the bell rang in the servant's hall for tea, she rose to her feet.

She had half an hour in which to have her tea; she could neither eat nor drink. She did not know whether she was disobeying orders, but she determined all at once she must go out into the square in front of the large house. She was almost suffocated with the close atmosphere, the sun was beating in through the windows of her room; she was almost faint and ill from the close confinement of the past week, she who was wont to live in the air all day long.

She put on the bonnet Mrs. Wilson had bought her, and the long straight cloak, and slipped quietly down the stairs.

She avoided the room where the servants were discussing their tea and scandal, and made her way up the area steps and out into the broad street.

She walked swiftly, and not quite certainly, across the road to the square, and then she could have cried with disappointment—the gate was locked, she could not enter.

She turned away, and then she caught sight of the park stretching beyond the end of a side street; she would go there.

She walked on, seeing nothing, noting nothing; conscious only of a longing to be

under the trees, and to fill her lungs with air. She was not frightened by the traffic, for there was almost none in this street. All she saw before her was the waving branches of the trees.

She passed one or two people—a smart lady or two, and some children, and several men. Just as she was crossing the road to enter the park, a hansom cab drove by, and a young man looked at her in that unconscious way one stares at people in a big city. His face preserved its unconsciousness for a moment; then Maurice Montgomery put up his stick, stopped his cab, and, walking as quickly as his lameness would allow, he followed that humble black-robed figure into the park.

(To be continued.)

HER FATHER'S SECRET.

CHAPTER XII.—(continued.)

"But it is at Oakshaw!"

"Then I must secretly go to Oakshaw in search of it," said Ilde, quietly. "Come, papa, do not be alarmed about me. I am young and strong and able to protect you and myself. You must have confidence in me, and be surprised at nothing I may do."

She looked so determined that the Baronet yielded assent to her wish, feeling at the same time that the hopes he had thought dead were capable of revivification.

"If you should go to Oakshaw, dear," he said, "you must not go alone."

"I shall not go alone, father."

"He may have hidden the paper somewhere about his desk, or in his library. You would have to be very cautious, and careful. I am afraid you will have your journey for nothing."

"There, papa, you are getting nervous again. Have faith and confidence in me, and I will do what I can. If I fail, then we will bear our hard lot with all the patience we may. You did not sleep last night, and you look thoroughly exhausted. You must let me put you to sleep!"

She arose and procured from her chamber a pretty crystal carafe filled with fragrant water, and then knelt by the couch, and proceeded gently to bathe her father's face with the cool, refreshing liquid.

Afterwards, she soothed him again with soft mesmeric touches, her hand falling gently and quietly upon his forehead, and driving away from his temples the sullen pain that had long brooded there.

Her efforts were soon crowned with success. The pale eyelids drooped over the weary eyes, the lashes rested upon the hollow cheeks, and Sir Allyn Dare slept peacefully, as he had not slept for weeks and months.

And then Ilde arose quietly, drew down the silken curtains, shutting out the sunlight from the little nook, and went into her chamber, letting the lace curtains fall around the sleeper.

Her first movement was to bathe her face with cologne-water to remove all traces of recent emotion. Her second was to gather up the loose masses of her shining hair, fastening them together with a couple of golden arrows.

Then, after glancing at her reflection in a long mirror niched between two windows, she noiselessly crossed the floor, and stole from the apartment, closing the door behind her.

She crossed the wide corridor, and knocked gently at the door opposite her own, and then, in obedience to a request from within, she opened the door, and entered the apartment.

It was similar in size to her own, but it had no oriel window, no silken hangings, no profusion of *bijouterie*, yet it was a pleasant home like room, with its tasteful furniture, and its evidences of feminine occupancy in

the tiny baskets of bright Berlin wools, and scraps of embroidery, and in the inlaid guitar that lay on the window-seat, amidst two hillocks of new music.

This was the private room of Miss Aradale, Sir Allyn Dare's ward, to whom allusion had been made.

At the moment of Ilde's entrance Miss Aradale was reclining indolently upon a velvet couch, her form loosely encircled by a dressing-gown, and holding a book in her hand.

She was a very ordinary-looking girl, with a plain, nearly ugly face, and with shy and retiring manners. She made no more pretensions to wit than to beauty, belonging, as was apparent, to the class of common-place women; but like most of those very women she had certain attractions. Hers consisted in her ready affections, her quick sympathies, and warm, confiding heart. She was well educated, refined, and clinging in her disposition.

We have said that Ilde loved no one in the world but her father. We should have excepted Miss Aradale, whom she regarded with sisterly affection, and who loved her in return with enthusiastic fervour, admiring her brave, noble nature, her gentleness, yet resoluteness, and exulting in her extraordinary loveliness.

"Good-morning, Kate," said Ilde, advancing towards the couch.

"Oh, is it you, Ilde?" exclaimed Miss Aradale, springing up, and flinging aside her book. "Good-morning, dear. I suppose it is nearly noon, and I am still in this wrapper; and she glanced lugubriously down at her attire. "You have quite spoiled me since I came to Edenocourt. I used to rise with the lark, but during the year I have been here I have breakfasted alone, so have no inducement to get up. Is Sir Allyn well to-day?"

"Not very well," said Ilde; "he is weary and exhausted. Poor papa! I have hopes though that he will get better soon."

"I hope he will, Ilde, for your sake as well as his own. I have often thought, when you have attended upon him day and night for weeks without ceasing, that you were striving for a martyr's crown. I do believe you are the most devoted daughter in the world. There is nothing you would not do for Sir Allyn."

Ilde sighed softly and unconsciously. "How grave and sad you look!" said Miss Aradale, struck by the quietness of Ilde's manner. "You have worn yourself out at last."

"No, Kate, but I have something upon my mind. Can I make a partial confidant of you, and depend upon your thorough discretion and silence?"

Kate Aradale answered in the affirmative. She was Ilde's senior by two years, but she looked up to the Baronet's daughter with the respect and affection usually coming from a junior, and Ilde felt sure she would find a more faithful ally in her than in any one else whom she knew.

"Sit down, Kate," she said, gravely. "I hardly know how to tell you what I wish, because I may be trenching upon a secret which is not mine to impart, and which in fact I do not myself understand. You know that papa has long been ill, that he has been troubled about something?"

"Yes, Ilde, but how can I be of any assistance—"

"Wait a minute, Kate," and now Ilde's voice grew hesitating, and a sorrowful look gathered in her eyes. "You see—that is papa has an enemy—a wicked, cruel man, who has got hold of a secret of papa's, and this man came here last night—"

"Was it he?" interrupted Kate. "I was awakened by a terrible knocking at the door, and I covered up my head with the blankets."

"It was," assented Ilde, her gravity increasing, and her gaze suddenly becoming restless and avoiding that of her friend. "On account of having a hold upon papa, he came and insists upon marrying me."

"Upon marrying you? Is he young and handsome?"

"On the contrary, he is nearly as old papa, and in my opinion very ill-looking."

"But what will you do? Why don't Sir Allyn send him away?"

"He cannot, dear. This man gives me a month in which to get ready to marry him, but I shall never do so if I can help it. There is a paper, Kate, that would help papa, if I could get it, and I must go for it. I want you to go with me. Will you be so brave for my sake?"

"I would go anywhere with you, Ildel!" said Kate, impulsively. "When will you go?"

"Some night this week. I must think the matter over, and arrange my plans beforehand, or the journey may be fruitless. I must if possible discover where the paper is hidden. To accomplish this I must play a part with papa's enemy. Leave it all to me, Kate. I will plan, and we will execute together."

She offered no farther explanation of her intended proceeding, nor in regard to Therwell, and Kate Arsdale asked none. She was content to obey her younger friend unquestioningly, having the utmost reliance upon her wisdom and judgment.

They conversed together for an hour, Kate meanwhile making her toilet; they then went downstairs and into the garden, Ildel having first assured herself that Sir Allyn still slept.

From the garden they proceeded to the long shaded avenue leading from the lodge to the entrance of the dwelling. Here, arm-in-arm, they paced to and fro several times, inhaling the warmth and sweetness of the April day.

They still lingered there, when a woman came through the lodge gates and slowly approached them with a wearied step.

She was an elderly woman, with a strong, powerful form, and a pale, sorrow-worn face. A few locks of gray hair escaped from beneath the brim of her bonnet. Her attire was neat and had once been elegant, her black silk dress betraying the remains of a former lustre, and her Paisley shawl had been well kept, though slightly faded.

There was a listening, watchful air about this woman, as if she were looking for someone, that struck Ildel at once.

"Let us go upon the terrace," said Kate Arsdale, taking a step in that direction. "You are too much troubled to meet this woman, whoever she may be. Come, Ildel!"

"No, Kate, dear," answered Ildel, gently; "she looks tired and worn. Perhaps I might relieve her sorrows. The servants would but turn her away if she wanted help. I must see her."

The kind-hearted little maiden little knew how greatly that generous decision would influence her own future welfare.

She advanced with Kate to meet the newcomer, who paused, bowed respectfully, and said,—

"I am a stranger here, miss," and her glances singled out Ildel as the one to whom she addressed herself, "and I have walked far and am weary. I am no beggar, no tramp. I do not desire alms, but will you give me work?"

"Where is your home?" asked Ildel.

"I have none," was the sad reply. "I am homeless and friendless in my old age. But I can work, if you will only give me the opportunity. I was once prosperous, and I could not bear to remain near my old home when prosperity fled. I will be faithful, and will work for a simple home."

She spoke earnestly, her hollow eyes pleading for her more than her words. There was an air of refinement about her, and it was easy to see that she was truthful and sincere.

Ildel hesitated but a moment.

"It would be sad, indeed," she said, "if anyone wanting work should fail to obtain it. The housekeeper said yesterday that she wished to procure a seamstress, and if you can undertake that position you shall not

only find a good home, but a good salary. Mrs. Goss will arrange the terms with you. Come with me."

"Heaven bless you, young lady!" exclaimed the wanderer, with grateful fervour. "And heaven will bless you, I know," she added, speaking to herself. "One so generous, so sweet, and so good, will not know much of sorrow."

Ildel and her friend conducted the woman to a side entrance, led her through the corridors and halls, until they reached the housekeeper's room. The young mistress of Edencourt then introduced the new-comer to Mrs. Goss, the woman giving her name as Mrs. Amry, and requested that she should be engaged as seamstress.

"Have you any references?" asked the prudent housekeeper.

"Never mind the references this time, Mrs. Goss," said Ildel, noticing the red flush creeping over the woman's face. "I will vouch for Mrs. Amry. Order her a luncheon directly, please, for she has walked far this morning."

Mrs. Goss muttered something about references under her breath, but she hastened to comply good-naturedly with Ildel's commands, having, like all others at Edencourt, a profound respect and affection for her young mistress.

Ildel then, with a kind word to her elderly protégée, whom she promised to see again on the morrow, withdrew with Kate Arsdale to the drawing-room, leaving Mrs. Amry to the enjoyment of her luncheon as well as to the questionings of good Mrs. Goss.

But it was little that the worthy housekeeper gained by her inquiries. Either Mrs. Amry had nothing to tell beyond the fact that she had seen better days, or else she carried a secret well concealed under a simple exterior.

Rather annoyed at her non-success in learning the history of her seamstress, Mrs. Goss at last sent a servant to show the new-comer to her room, and indulged her lamentations in solitude at the unworldliness and simplicity of Miss Dare, and her hopes that Mrs. Amry would not set the house on fire that very night and slope with the spoons.

Meanwhile, the object of her suspicions took possession of a neat attic-chamber, with a half-expressed prayer of thanksgiving for the comfortable home in which she found herself installed.

"It is good to be settled at last, even for a little while," she murmured. "When I have earned a little money I will go forth again upon my search for him, but in the meantime I will take what little comfort I can; though heaven knows it's but little comfort I can appreciate. My heart is dead within me. Nothing can awake it to life again except the sight of him upon whom I have vowed vengeance!"

By this time she had approached the window, and was looking down upon the lawn.

"A noble place!" she said. "Edencourt they called it in the village, where they told me that if I could gain the hearing of Miss Dare I should be cared for. Heaven bless her sweet face, I say again—Ah! who is that?"

She had caught sight of a man's figure moving about among the trees on the lawn. The next moment it appeared in full view, and could be plainly seen to be that of Therwell.

"Is it possible?" demanded Mrs. Amry of herself, as she leaned breathlessly against the window-sill, and scanned the intruder earnestly. "Tis he, surely! 'Tis Therwell! Found! found at last!"

CHAPTER XIII.

But can the noble mind for ever brood,
The willing victim of a weary mood,
On heartless cares that squander life away?

Campbell

The face of the mysterious woman, whom

Ildel Dare had so generously received into her home lighted up with a look of passionate joy as she continued to regard the moving form of Therwell upon the lawn below, and to mutter her certainty as to his identity.

"I cannot be mistaken!" she exclaimed, leaning heavily upon the window-sill and watching him with a gaze as keen as that of a hawk. "He has changed a little—he used not to be so stout—but his walk, his carriage, his sly look, remain the same. Yet it can hardly be possible. I have sought him for years, and failed to find him. I believed but now that he had gone abroad, and wished to earn money to follow him. Yet I have stumbled upon him when I had for a time given up the search. Surely, Providence guided me to this house. At last," and her face grew fierce and wild, "at last I stand upon the threshold of my revenge!"

Her tone was exultant as she spoke those last words, and her voice lingered upon the word revenge, as if it had a sweet and pleasing sound to her ears.

The next moment, as if with a sudden fear that he might look up and see her, she drew the curtain so that it might partially shade her face without impairing her view, and muttered,—

"I must be cautious—very cautious and watchful. If he were to suspect my presence here he would stop at nothing to remove me from his path. What can he be doing here? He seems to be a guest of the family. I must find out his relation towards Sir Allyn—I must discover how Miss Dare regards him—but nothing, I swear it, nothing shall balk me of my revenge!"

She looked like a Nemesis as she stood there, holding in her hands a terrible retribution for Vincent Therwell. Her worn wrinkled face grew wilder and fiercer in its expression, her gray hair hung around her cheeks in disarray, and her gaunt figure seemed suddenly to have increased in stature.

"It will take time," she said, in a low whisper, still watching the unconscious figure, "but I will be patient. I have sought for him too many years to spoil all by impatience now. I have changed during all these years. He would not recognize me now if he were to see me, I think!"

She continued to watch him until he had disappeared among the shrubbery, and then she turned from the window, surveyed her features in the mirror, and with an expression of satisfaction took her way down to the housekeeper's room.

Mrs. Goss was seated there alone, her ample figure in its gown of black silk occupying an easy-chair. She had her knitting in her hand, but she was looking idly from the window-towards the flower gardens, a very small view of which she was able to command.

"Come in, Mrs. Amry," she said, graciously, as the new seamstress paused near the door. "If you wish to go to work to-day you will find plenty to do upon the table yonder."

Mrs. Amry replied by thanking her, selected some work from the pile indicated, and took her seat near the housekeeper, beside the window.

For some minutes the seamstress plodded quietly with her needle, speaking only in reply to the questions of the inquisitive housekeeper, but her mind was busy in attempts to frame certain inquiries she wished to make in the most unobtrusive manner.

Her plain face, her quiet well-brushed attire, her gray hair, and evident age, added to her lady-like manner, awakened considerable interest for her in the mind of Mrs. Goss, who soon relaxed in her coldness and became social and pleasant.

As Mrs. Amry paused at last to thread a needle and to ask with apparent carelessness some question with regard to the family, she happened to turn her gaze in the direction of the flower-garden.

In a moment her wrinkled face flushed, her heart began to beat wildly, and it was with

difficulty she could conceal her agitation from the eyes of her companion.

She had seen Therwell again. He was sauntering carelessly among the flower-bordered paths, his hands folded behind his back, and his round, smooth face wearing its usual self-complacent expression.

"Is that gentleman Sir Allyn Dare?" asked the seamstress, her voice sounding to herself hollow and unnatural.

"He Sir Allyn!" exclaimed the housekeeper, in a tone expressive of astonishment as such a mistake, and jealous wherever the name of her master was concerned. "I should hope not. He don't look like the descendant of one of the oldest families in the kingdom. He don't look like a Dare of Edencourt—begging his pardon, seeing he's a guest of the family. Why, he used to be the secretary of the late Sir Allyn. I remember him well. I can't think how you took him for Sir Allyn Dare!"

Mrs. Amry hastened to apologise, seeing that Mrs. Goss had been deeply wounded by her question.

"Oh, its of no consequence," said the housekeeper, rather haughtily. "If you don't know the difference between Sir Allyn and his late father's secretary, 'tain't for me to teach you. This gentleman is a Mr. Therwell. He used to fawn around the present Sir Allyn when he was plain Mr. Dare, and so I suppose he has come to make him a visit now. I never liked Mr. Therwell. Nobody ever liked him at Edencourt except the late Sir Allyn and the present Baronet."

"Is Mr. Therwell married?" inquired Mrs. Amry, still looking at the figure in the garden.

"I believe not. I'm sure I don't know. When he was secretary here he said he was a widower. That was ten years ago, and he may have had ten wives since for aught I know."

"Has he been here long?"

"He came last night, at the most extraordinary hour I ever heard of for an arrival. It was about midnight, for I heard the clock strike very soon after. Such a knocking too as he made. I thought for certain it must be a messenger from Court, or something like that, though Sir Allyn never goes to Court."

Continuing in this garrulous manner, Mrs. Goss afforded the seamstress considerable information with regard to Therwell, but she owed herself at a loss to comprehend his present visit, when visitors had not been entertained for years at Edencourt.

Therwell walked to and fro for a time in the garden and then continued his walk to the park, amidst the shades of which he vanished from view.

He had scarcely disappeared when girlish voices were heard, and Ilde in company with her father's ward, strolled arm in arm down the garden path, absorbed in the discussion of the plan, which the Baronet's daughter had conceived for the partial deliverance of her father from the clutches of Therwell.

Mrs. Goss's face beamed as she regarded her young mistress.

"Isn't she lovely?" she cried, admiringly. "She's a Dare all over, from the crown of her pretty head to the soles of her little feet. She'll make a grand marriage one of these days."

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Goss," said the seamstress, hurriedly, "but I want to thank Miss Dare for all her kindness to me. Would it be wrong for me to intrude upon her now?"

Without waiting, however, for the housekeeper's reply, she dropped her work, opened the door and hastened towards the garden.

Ilde and Miss Arsdale beheld her approach, and paused until she came up, pale and breathless.

"Is there anything more that I can do for you?" inquired Ilde kindly, as the woman stopped at a little distance and regarded her beseechingly.

"No, Miss Dare, I only want to thank

you for all you have done for me already," answered the seamstress. "You have fed and sheltered me and given me a home. Heaven bless you for it. I feel grateful to you and all your family. When I saw Sir Allyn in the garden a minute ago—"

"Sir Allyn in the garden!" interrupted Ilde, alarmed. "Why, I left him asleep in my room. You cannot have seen him!"

"It was a stout gentleman—"

"It was Mr. Therwell!" said Ilde, a shadow creeping over her face—a shadow that was not unmarked by the old woman.

"Your brother, perhaps, miss?"

"He is no relation to me, Mrs. Amry," declared Ilde, with a shudder. "No relation whatever, as yet!"

The last word was almost inaudible, but the quick ears of the new seamstress caught it, and a look of surprise appeared on her worn countenance.

"Pardon me, Miss Dare," she said, earnestly, coming nearer. "I am a poor old woman whom you have befriended, and I would give the feeble remnant of my life to make yours joyous and happy. I heard in the village, where they told me of your benevolence, that you had no mother. I have seen a great deal of the world, I have borne children, and here her face became clouded, and I have learned to read faces as one would read an open book. Will you permit me to ask if you love this man?"

Ilde's face answered for her, with its quick, unconscious curl of the lip, and its sudden expression of aversion.

"I see; but you said 'as yet,'" said the old woman.

Ilde found it impossible to resent this strange interest in her affairs, Mrs. Amry's manner being so respectful, so fearful of offending, and withal so motherly.

"I said as yet, Mrs. Amry," she answered, "because it is not impossible that Mr. Therwell may become my—my husband!"

She spoke with a sudden tone of despair in her voice as she uttered that word in its revolting connection with Therwell.

The seamstress looked startled.

"You do not love him, yet you think of marrying him," she said, in astonishment. "Beware of him, Miss Dare. He is a very serpent, a wicked, base, unscrupulous man—if his countenance may be trusted!" she added.

"Forgive me if I have offended you, miss."

She saw that she had not offended, and, after repeated apologies, and thanks, returned to the housekeeper's room, muttering—

"Strange! He is about to marry the daughter of Sir Allyn Dare against her will. What can be the reason? I must look into the matter!"

Ilde looked after her protégée a moment in silence, and Kate Arsdale said,—

"What a singular old woman, Ilde! She is a fortune teller."

"No, Kate," interrupted Ilde, thoughtfully. "She looked to me as if she had known Therwell at some time, and had been injured by him. Did you notice how her eyes flashed when she denounced him? Her voice was full of feeling and hatred. She has either known Therwell or someone like him, or else she is not in her right mind."

"If Therwell were here a moment since, Ilde, he is liable to return at any moment. Let us go to the terrace."

Ilde assented, and they took their way thither. There were seats under the trees, near the marble balustrade, overlooking the river; the two girls seated themselves, and continued the conversation which Mrs. Amry had so recently interrupted.

Nearly an hour was spent in discussing Ilde's plans, and, at length, they were about to return to the mansion when the splash of oars was heard in the river, and, looking over the balustrade, they witnessed the swift approach of a gaily painted little skiff.

It was rowed by Viscount Tressilian—it was his only occupant.

At sight of this Ilde's face became crimson,

and her heart beat more quickly. She had no time to withdraw from observation, for Lord Tressilian had caught sight of her at the same moment in which she beheld him, he raised his hat gallantly and bowed, and then, with a sudden sweep of his ready oar, he turned his boat towards the marble steps leading up to the terrace.

The next moment he had gained them, sprung out, drawn his boat towards the shore, and mounted to the terrace.

He advanced towards Ilde with an eager impulsiveness of manner that evinced his already lover-like feelings towards her, and the maiden, forgetful of the claims of Therwell upon her hand, welcomed him with a smile and a blush that left him in no doubt as to her favourable feeling.

After politely dismissing Miss Arsdale, whom he had met before, during his visits to Sir Allyn, Lord Tressilian said, with a smile.

"As you see, Miss Dare, I have availed myself of your favourite means of locomotion in coming here. The Thames is scarcely so pleasant as Eiden Lake, as I can vouch, but it is here a stream pretty enough to form one of the boundaries of Eden," and he glanced towards the mansion and its surrounding grounds. "My visit this afternoon is to Sir Allyn. Do you think he will see me, Miss Dare?"

"He will, if awake," answered Ilde, the colour dying away from her cheeks. "Miss Arsdale and I will accompany you to the house."

Lord Tressilian noticed that she was paler than when they had met by the lake, and that she seemed oppressed by a burden of grief; but he attributed the change to her anxiety with regard to her father—anxiety which he had come hoping to dissipate with generous offers of pecuniary assistance.

They walked slowly towards the dwelling, the young Viscount's manner full of suppressed joyousness, the cause of which he did not permit Ilde to mistake. He was so gentle and reverential to her, and his eyes dwelt so lovingly upon her face, that the maiden must have been blind had she remained ignorant of the hopes he had conceived from her demureness towards him.

The discovery gave her a keen intense pain, but through all this there ran a vague thrill of happiness.

As they neared the mansion Ilde caught sight of Therwell emerging from the park, and noticed that he was bestowing a scrutinizing look upon Lord Tressilian. Quickening her steps, instinctively, she led the way to the private shrubbery and to the glazed door opening into her father's study.

She entered this pleasant little room, followed by Kate Arsdale and Lord Tressilian, and found her father there, seated in his easy chair, in a thoughtful, troubled attitude.

"I have brought you a visitor, papa," she said, with perhaps a shade more of tender respect in her manner than usual—"Lord Tressilian."

Sir Allyn seemed surprised and disturbed at beholding his daughter in company with the young Viscount, but he arose courteously and extended his hand to his guest, who grasped it with a hearty frankness.

"Lord Tressilian says his visit is for you exclusively, papa," said Ilde, "and so we shall leave you to entertain him. Come, Kate."

Linking her arm in that of her friend, she retired from the study, with the design of intercepting Therwell, and preventing him from becoming an intruder upon Sir Allyn and his guest.

When the door had closed behind the young ladies the Viscount expressed his surprise at the change for the worse in the appearance of the Baronet since he had last seen him, and inquired if he had placed himself under a physician's care.

Sir Allyn shook his head sadly.

"A physician could do me no good, Gay," he said, gloomily. "There are diseases

beyond the reach of medicine. My trouble is here," and he covered his heart with his hand.

"You have not an organic disease of the heart?" cried the viscount, in alarm.

"No, Gay—but I have trouble," and Sir Allyn's voice was almost a wail.

Lord Tressilian's bright handsome face sobered in sympathy with the father of Ide, and he drew nearer to him, taking the seat Therwell had but recently occupied, and said,—

"Sir Allyn, is there nothing I can do to lessen your trouble? Command me, as if I were your own son."

"Thank you, my dear boy," returned Sir Allyn, reaching out his hand feebly to grasp that of his guest. "You are generous like your father—but there is nothing you can do."

"You do not like to be indebted to me," said the viscount, reproachfully. "You think you have no claims upon me except those of a lifelong friendship for my father and for me. Will you not give me a right to serve you?"

The Baronet looked up, not comprehending the drift of the question.

"Pardon me if I am abrupt, Sir Allyn," continued Lord Tressilian, eager and hopeful, "but I must come to the point at once, and say at once what I came here to say without circumlocution. I need not remind you of your fraternal friendship for my father, nor the hopes you and he used to entertain of a future alliance of our two families. You remember that Ide and I were always together, that we loved each other from early childhood, and that, when we parted four years ago, she was fourteen and I eighteen years old. She was but a child, but I had a man's heart and a man's strong power to love. When I went away it was with the resolution of returning in due time and trying to win Ide to become my wife. I made my father my confidant, and he approved by resolution. During my years of study abroad the thought of Ide was my continual safeguard, my consolation, and my hope. I looked forward to the time when I should return and say to you what I am saying now. My love for her but grew and strengthened with the passing years, until it has become the chief principle of my existence. I came home, and have visited you often during the past month, but some fatality has prevented my seeing your daughter until to day!"

He paused, as Sir Allyn turned away his pale anguished face, and then resumed, with fever-like ardour:

"I found her as innocent, as gentle, as childlike, as she was four years ago, but with added beauty and loveliness. She looked to me like an angel, Sir Allyn, and it did not take long for me to discover that in mind and heart she was as lovely as in person. I have come to you to ask for your permission to pay my addresses to Miss Dare."

"But you have seen her scarcely a minute, Gay," faltered the Baronet. "Ide could not have become interested in you in so short a time!"

"I have reason to think she would not reject me," returned the Viscount, modestly, his dark cheek flushing like a ripened peach. "She allowed me to tell her something of my feelings towards her."

"What?" ejaculated the Baronet, pained and astonished. "Did Ide let you talk of love to her now?"

"No, Sir Allyn, but this morning, when we met by Eden Lake, I ventured to tell her how I had loved her during my years of absence, and with what hopes I had returned."

The Baronet groaned, remembering the communication he had greeted his daughter with upon her return from that meeting.

"Do you think she loves you, Gay?" he asked, with the voice of a man inquiring his doom.

He read his answer in the soft sweet light that shone in Gay Tressilian's eyes, in the sudden tremulous quiver of the mobile lips,

and in the increasing glow of the bright vermilion that tinted his cheeks.

"Oh, heaven!" muttered the father, in abstract misery. "My poor, brave little Ide! When I told her of my compact, I little thought that I was striking a double edged knife to her heart. She hid it from me; she smiled in my face this afternoon, and cooed me to sleep. I did not think she was suffering so keenly. I did not dream that she had twice as much to bear as I, and that she was being martyred!"

Of these words only a faint incoherent murmur reached Tressilian's ears, but he interpreted the Baronet's agitation to refer to his supposed financial embarrassments.

"Sir Allyn," he said, as delicately as possible, "Ide told me, in confidence, this morning, that you were in great distress, and she had surmised the cause. She told me that this distress was caused in some way by the secretary of your late father. She believed that you owed this man a heavy sum, and that he had a claim upon you which would sweep away Eden Court from your hands. If this be true, Sir Allyn, I beg that you will use my purse as your own. Allow me to become your son as soon as Ide will accept me as her husband, and then," he added, ingenuously, "you can have no reason for declining to accept from me filial assistance!"

The Baronet had listened to these remarks at first with incredulity and pain, but those emotions finally gave place to bitter and poignant grief.

"I thought my cup of sorrow had been filled before," he said, drowsily. "I had not dreamed of this. Ide cannot be your wife, Gay. I do not refuse your proposal on account of any pecuniary distresses. I know you would not think less of her if she were dowryless. I appreciate your delicate generosity, your chivalry, your love for my poor child. I am sorry for your disappointment—I dare not think of Ide's! Give up your boyish dream!"

"It is no boyish dream," interrupted Tressilian. "I have given to Ide the best love of my life, and I cannot give her up, Sir Allyn, except at her own command!"

"You must! Ide is not free to marry," confessed the sorrow-stricken father.

"Not free, Sir Allyn?"

"Not free! Pity me, Gay, and do not blame me! I love you as if you were my own son. Nothing could make me happier than to see you wedded to my child. I own that once I dreamed of such a union, but that was years ago. Since your return a month since from the continent, I have purposely kept Ide from your sight, lest you should see her and love her. I meant to spare her a grief which it seems she is now silently enduring. I cannot explain fully, Gay, why I have acted as I have done. It is enough to say that I could not well do otherwise."

"What is it that you have done, Sir Allyn?"

"I have promised Ide in marriage to Mr. Therwell."

Lord Tressilian uttered a cry of astonishment.

"You cannot mean it, Sir Allyn!" he cried. "Why, it would be barbarous to wed Ide to that man. She does not love him."

The Baronet shook his head.

The lover expressed his surprise in unmeasured terms, and did not conceal his indignation.

Much as he loved and respected the gentle Baronet, he could not avoid uttering a stinging rebuke for the apparent heartlessness exhibited by him. He declared that such a promise could not be binding, and that he should counsel and entreat the maiden to be guided by the dictates of her own heart.

"The law will protect Ide from the designs of that vile man even if her father will not!" he cried. "Thank heaven she need not marry anyone against her will in this country!"

Sir Allyn listened meekly to this storm of indignation—too crushed to offer a word in

his own defence; but when the ardent, high-spirited Viscount paused, he answered, sobbingly,—

"I don't deserve all that, Gay. I would sacrifice my life to secure Ide's happiness. You do not know how I love her. She is all I have, and she has been everything to me. You cannot guess half her nobleness—half her goodness. But she will tell you herself, Gay, that I regret the necessity for this marriage, as much as she or you can regret it. She knows how I love her, and she does not blame me."

Bewildered by the apparent mystery of the affair, Tressilian tried in vain to induce the Baronet to speak more freely.

He learned only that Ide had not been aware of her peculiar relations towards Therwell that morning at their first meeting, and that pecuniary assistance would be of no avail towards freeing her from her engagement.

He saw, however, that the father could not even think of the proposed marriage without experiencing poignant anguish, and that all his pleadings and reproaches were useless.

But he was resolved not to relinquish the hopes that made life dear to him until he had communicated with the maiden. As if reading his thoughts, Sir Allyn said, huskily,—

"Gay, I beg you not to see Ide to-day. She has enough to bear—poor child! This has been already an eventful day for her, and I fear —"

"Say no more, Sir Allyn," interrupted the Viscount, rising. "I will not see her to-day, but afterwards I shall hold myself free to call upon her. She understands my feelings towards her, she will have faith in me as I will in her. I shall respect your confidence, but I am sure that heaven will never permit this proposed marriage to be consummated."

He held out his hand in respectful pity for the Baronet, and then turned and left the room, going into the corridor.

At the very threshold he ran against Therwell, whose attitude was that of an eaves-dropper.

The rivals exchanged glances, and Therwell, cool and self-assured as he usually was, momentarily quailed before the flashing eyes of Lord Tressilian; he then entered the study while the young Viscount passed on through the hall and out at the front door of the mansion.

On gaining a little distance he paused, and looked back with an expression of ineffable love upon his face.

"Give Ide up!" he said, half aloud. "Never—never! I will fathom this mystery. I will unmask the designs of that counsellor—free Sir Allyn from his clutches, and then claim my noble darling for my wife. We shall see which shall triumph—Therwell or Tressilian—villany or love!"

CHAPTER XIV.

What can we not endure

When pains are lessened by the hope of cure?

Nabb.

The mysterious bride of Sir Hugh Chellis stood before her baffled guardian, her face lighted up with the triumph of her deliverance, and her eyes luminous with a grand and solemn joy.

Mr. Wittmer turned his face from her, but the ex-governor, pale and fearing, watched her every movement as if fascinated by the change in the being she had assisted to wrong and oppress.

Lady Chellis's maid could not avoid casting frequent looks of exultation at the discomfited enemies of her young mistress, and she drew nearer to the latter, as if to call attention to the fact that but for her the position of affairs at the Wilmer Mansion would have been very different at that moment.

For some minutes there was a profound silence, which was broken at last by the young bride, who said, quietly,—

"Uncle James—Mr. Wilmer—I have proved to you that I am legally a wife, and that your guardianship over me has ceased entirely. I am now my own mistress. You will find me able to defend myself and to take possession of my fortune, which now passes into my own hands."

Mr. Wilmer started and said, huskily,—

"It is true, Adah, that I have seen your marriage certificate, but you may have forged it."

"You can consult the church register, Mr. Wilmer," she said, proudly.

Her late guardian moved uneasily in his chair, but did not lift his gaze to her face. In truth, he had no doubt of the authenticity of the marriage certificate, but he was puzzled, stunned and stupefied by the suddenly acquired freedom of his injured niece.

"It can't be true!" he ejaculated. "How could you find a husband so quickly? You could not have proposed for a gentleman's hand yourself? You could not have accosted a gentleman in the street and requested him to marry you. You have spirit enough for that, I believe, but you would have been repulsed as a lunatic, or worse. How did you obtain your husband?"

A quick flash shot into the cheeks of the young bride—a flash of maidenly shame and confusion—but her gaze was as clear and her manner as composed as before, and she replied,—

"That is my secret, Mr. Wilmer. It is enough that I am satisfied."

"I don't believe your husband is Sir Hugh Chellies at all," declared Mr. Wilmer. "The Chellies are one of the proudest families in the kingdom. Miss Dorothy Chellies is immensely rich, and I have heard that she is extremely fond of her wild young nephew—but she would leave every penny to strangers if she but fancied that he would contract a *mésalliance*."

"A marriage with Adah Wilmer would not be a *mésalliance* even for Sir Hugh Chellies," said the young bride, haughtily. "Miss Chellies herself once hoped to enter our family."

"True, but she did not expect to marry a lunatic," said Mr. Wilmer, with a sneer. "Sir Hugh, if he ever heard your name, and of course he has, has also heard that you are of infirm mind. He would not have married you, knowing who you were, and he would not have done so unless he were familiar with your history. I think I have proved that you have been cleverly imposed upon by some person who has neither right nor title to the name of Sir Hugh Chellies!"

A shadow flitted over the face of the maiden-bride, and she grew deathly pale with a sudden fear that her guardian had spoken truthfully.

"Was it probable," she asked herself, for the first time, "that the proud Sir Hugh Chellies, the heir presumptive to Miss Dorothy's wealth, the possessor of a good income and a handsome estate, should have been in the desperate straits from which she had rescued the young gentleman who had become her husband? Was it not likely that the young man had adopted the name of some friend and companion rather than recklessly expose his own to a person of whom he knew nothing, and whose face he had not then even seen?"

A remembrance of his honest blue eyes and of the innate nobility expressed in his features came in time to save her from torturing anguish. Repressing all signs of doubt or agitation, she said,—

"It is enough, Mr. Wilmer, that I am satisfied, and that I have proofs that I am married. The marriage is legal, whether my husband be a baronet or a chimney-sweep. All I desired was to be married. At last I can speak freely. I know why you have kept me a prisoner in my rooms for years. I know why you have given out to the world that I am in delicate health, and in an unsound state of mind. You know, as well as I do, that my health would have been perfect if I

had not been kept a close prisoner. You know, and the creature of your will knows," and she indicated Mrs. Barrat by a gesture, "that my intellect is as sound as yours."

"Well, what of it?"

"What of it?" repeated Lady Chellies, her eyes flashing with indignation and contempt. "Can you ask what of it? What of the fact that since my early girlhood I have been confined to my own room without a friend, save my poor foster-sister, Nelly? What of the fact that for years I have been allowed to see no face save yours, Nelly's and Mrs. Barrat's? What of the fact that all my household servants, those who served my father, and loved his daughter, have been trained to consider me sickly and of infirm mind? What of the fact that my family friends have been repulsed in all their attempts to see me, and have been sent away with the story that the sight of strange faces would aggravate my malady? What of the fact that my youth has been blighted, and my girlhood been full of torture instead of happiness? Good heavens! Can you ask 'What of it?'" And her voice rang with the clearness of a flute through the long saloon. "I wonder that the question did not paley your false hypocritical tongue!"

Mr. Wilmer shrank affrighted before this outburst of righteous indignation. He moved restlessly, glanced from the glowing face of the young lady to the sympathetic countenance of her maid, and then his gaze sought the features of Mrs. Barrat, as if he were desirous of her aid and counsel.

But Mrs. Barrat was as frightened as himself. She had retreated a little before one of the bride's soye-like glances, and appeared now undecided whether to depart or remain.

Receiving no encouragement from his confederate, Mr. Wilmer strove to appear self-possessed, and said,—

"Adah, my poor niece, do you not know that your present excitement goes far to confirm all that I have ever said regarding the state of your mental health? If any stranger were to see you now, would he blame me for believing that your mind was unhinged? Perhaps I have been misled by my fears," and his tone expressed hypocritical grief. "Perhaps my anxiety prevented me from judging fairly. If this be so, Adah—if I have been deceived—mistaken—if my love for you has caused me to err—"

Sir Hugh's young bride drew herself up indignantly.

"If you have been mistaken!" she exclaimed, her voice sounding like the voice of an accusing angel. "You have not been mistaken, Mr. Wilmer. You have known as well as I that my mind has never for one instant wavered from its just balance. If you had fancied me really ill, would you not have procured for me the attendance of a physician? Would you not have—But why do I parley with you? Let us come to the point at once. Your wicked designs against me have been assisted by the fact that during the few last months of his life my poor father had not the command of all his faculties. You have given out to the world that I have inherited his malady, when you well knew that his infirmity was the result of disease and not constitutional. You have pretended that I have been for years sickly and delicate. Do I look so?"

She awaited a reply.

She did look delicate from the effects of long confinement, but that her health had been seriously impaired no one who looked in her clear bright eyes, at her now flushed cheeks, and at her rounded figure, could for an instant believe.

Mr. Wilmer maintained silence, and the bride continued, in her solemnly accusing tones.—

"No, I am not sickly, and I never have been. My mind is not impaired and never has been. To carry out your wicked schemes it was necessary that you should act as you have done. It was you, James Wilmer, who

tended my father during the last months of his life. It was you who established a paramount influence over him. It was you who persuaded him to make an unjust will, acting upon his well-known preference for early marriage. It was you who dictated the terms of that will, by which I was to marry before attaining the age of twenty-one, or forfeit to you the whole of my fortune. My poor father could not have known what he was doing when he signed his name to that fatal document—a document which has wrecked his daughter's happiness."

Her voice was low and sad as she uttered the last words.

"From the moment of my father's death," she continued, conquering her momentary weakness, "you schemed to prevent my marriage before the specified time. You professed a constant solicitude for my health, declared to everyone your fears that I had inherited from my father a predisposition to insanity. You enlisted my governess, Mrs. Barrat, in your schemes. You gradually curtailed my liberty. You related to my friends and my parents' friends exaggerated accounts of my childish freaks and words, innocent in themselves, yet construed by you into indications of a mind trembling on its balance. Every ebullition of childish gaiety, every period of sadness, when I wept for my dead parents, were declared by you to be unnatural. And, at last, when I openly rebelled against your odious tyranny and constant vigilance, you confined me in my own rooms, and gave out that my insanity had become an established fact, and that I was subject to dangerous moods in which I might do myself, or others, violence. Everyone believed you, for were you not the only brother of my poor father? Had he not loved you tenderly, and constituted you the guardian of his daughter? Could anyone doubt your affection for your niece, when you never spoke of her supposed affliction without hypocritical tears? So you have been permitted to carry out your schemes unquestioned. And in three days more," she added, slowly and impressively, "I should have been twenty-one, and unmarried, if nothing had occurred to mar your plans!"

"Adah, you wrong me cruelly," exclaimed Mr. Wilmer. "I am not the monster you have painted me. No one would credit such assertions."

Adah smiled quietly.

"Where is your husband, if you are married?" continued her late guardian. "Is he waiting in the hall?"

"No, he is not with me. I made an agreement with him that I should be unmolested by him," declared Lady Chellies. "I can bear his name or not, as I prefer. My marriage is to be kept secret until I choose to announce it. But, in any case, Sir Hugh's path-in-life will be different from mine. Ours will be a marriage only in name!"

Mr. Wilmer looked astonished, and then a quick gleam of satisfaction passed over his face.

His busy brain had renewed the scheming which had just seemed to have received so fatal a check.

His niece had detailed her history without a particle of exaggeration, but even her bitter experience had not enabled her to comprehend fully his utter baseness.

Her father had been the elder and half-brother of James Wilmer, and as different from him as light is different from darkness. He had been a rear-admiral in the Navy, and possessed a sailor's nature, noble, brave, and unsuspecting. He had married early, before attaining the age of twenty, and his bride was three years younger than he. This early marriage had been blessed with a degree of harmony and happiness but seldom vouchsafed to any union. Not a cloud had shadowed their united lives, except the necessity for frequent absences on the part of the admiral, and the fact that for many years they were childless. But, at last, when the old sailor's face had grown wrinkled, and his hair began to be

streaked with grey, and his wife had become a grave, dignified matron, a child was born to them, the Adah of our story. It had needed but her advent to fill their cup of joy to the brim, and the fond father exulted in his happy home, and the society of his dear ones, until, when Adah had attained her twelfth year, that home was suddenly darkened by the shadow of death, and the dearest of his dear ones had drooped and faded into her grave.

Stricken by the terrible blow, he gave himself up to grief.

He summoned his half-brother, James Wilmer, to his home, and relinquished his affairs into his hands. His mind gave way, and for months he was insensible to the ministrations of his daughter or to the consolations of his friends. He was never violent in his insanity. The bluff old sailor, who had been a terror to evil doers upon his ship, submitted to be led about by Adah like a child, gathered flowers, and sat in the sunshine, indulging in harmless vagaries, and talking continually of his lost wife. A year after her death he joined her in the world beyond, and the orphaned Adah became the charge of James Wilmer.

Her parents had been alike wealthy, and their united fortunes had descended to their only child. As fortune loves to shower favours upon those who have no need of them, so Adah's wealth was augmented by a legacy from her godmother, and by a legacy or two from other sources—thus constituting her an heiress of remarkable pretensions.

To all this wealth her uncle was, of course, the next heir, in the event of her dying when unmarried, and before attaining her majority. Her father's singular will, made through the influence of the younger brother, however, opened a straighter path to the possession of the larger share of these united fortunes, and it became the whole plan of James Wilmer's existence to prevent his niece's marriage before the specified period.

He engaged for her a governess—Mrs. Barrat—upon whom he could depend to second his schemes, and from the moment of his brother's death entered upon a course of action well calculated to bring about the very event he desired. He let fall insinuations to the effect that Adah had inherited her father's predisposition to insanity; he termed her grief at her bereavements "violent," "ungovernable," and "insane."

When the edge of her sorrow had worn off, and she became at times gay and frolicsome, he sighed over her unequal spirits.

When she wandered by herself in the park, at her country home, he ordered Mrs. Barrat to follow her, lest she should do herself any injury. Of course the high-spirited girl rebelled against the restrictions placed upon her movements, and upbraided her relative; but he professed to believe that the malady, against the encroachments of which he had so long guarded her, had overcome her mind at last, and he condemned her to the strictest seclusion.

There was no one to combat his decision. The servants believed that their young mistress had succumbed to her father's malady, and the friends of her parents applauded her uncle for the tender and devoted care of his niece.

The fact that Admiral Wilmer had been insane during the last year of his life prevented any doubts of the truthfulness of the girl's guardian, and Adah's life had been passed in deep solitude, cheered only by the presence of her maid, Nelly.

Mrs. Barrat had proved an able coadjutor of the villainous uncle.

She was a needy young widow, who had been thankful enough at first for a home and shelter, but who had gradually aspired to become the wife of James Wilmer. He had, in fact, promised to elevate her from the post of governess to that of mistress of the house, in the event of the success of his plans. Once past Adah's majority, her fortune would become his, and should she remain unmarried

he offered to share that fortune with Mrs. Barrat and make her his wife, provided she lent him efficient aid; and so for years she had worked in his interests, patiently and anxiously looking forward to her reward.

During the years of Adah's confinement Mr. Wilmer had scarcely dared to leave his niece's country home, lest his wickedness should meet with its deserved exposure.

He liked society, and desired to become familiar with the gay world, and at last had been tempted to spend a winter in town. Adah, with her maid—who had always professed to believe her insane, and who had frequently acted as her jailer—and the ex-governess accompanied him, and he had enjoyed himself in fancied security, little dreaming that his prisoner would circumvent his schemes.

It was no wonder that he looked at her in astonishment now, for she was very different from the pale desponding girl who had so often pleaded to him with tears for a moment's freedom, for a moment in which she might wander unrestrained and listen to the songs of the birds and feel the sunshine on her cheeks.

(To be continued.)

CONSTANCE CAREW.

CHAPTER III.

CONSTANCE SEES HER CASTLES FALL.

CAPTAIN CAREW is tall and thin, with clearly-outlined features, pale blue eyes, a mouth and chin indicative of weakness of purpose, though the former is almost hidden by his grey moustache.

With the exception of this moustache his face is cleanly shaven, but his hair is grey, and, though it is evident to the most casual observer that he takes every care of his personal appearance, he cannot hide the fact that his age is little, if anything, under sixty.

"Constance, what is the matter with you?" he asks, sharply, as he stands in the doorway, his daughter's hand extended accusingly towards him.

His voice wakes her. She covers her face with her hands; then, removing them slowly, she sighs, and says faintly,—

"I must have been dreaming; but I am glad to see you, papa."

"Yes, I couldn't manage to get to the station to meet you," he responds, uneasily, "and Mrs. Treleven said she was sure you would be able to take care of yourself if I missed the train. But why didn't you come round to her house as I desired you to do in my note?"

"I was too ill, papa. I had a headache, and I am not very fond of Mrs. Treleven, nor of her daughters."

A frown comes over the Captain's face, and he answers, sharply,—

"Nor of me either, it seems; but I am sent to fetch you to finish up the evening with them. Do you mean to come?"

"Oh, no, I feel positively ill. It is quite out of the question, papa," replies Constance.

"Of course it's out of the question," assents Jenifer, whereupon her master cries, sharply,—

"Hold your tongue and mind your own business, Jenifer."

The old woman takes this rebuff as a matter of course; evidently she is accustomed to this kind of thing, for she says, placidly, as though her master has not spoken,—

"Poor dearie! she came home looking like a ghost, and nobody at the station to meet her. I'd have gone myself, but you said I wasn't to do nothing of the sort, sir."

"It wasn't that, it was my head that was so bad," says Constance, feebly. "It is bad now, and my hands are hot and feverish. If I am not better in the morning, I must have a doctor."

"Shall I send for Dr. Perry at once?" asks her father, beginning to be alarmed.

"No, I would rather wait till the morning," she replies. "Perhaps I shall sleep it off."

Then after some further conversation Captain Carew says he must return to Mrs. Treleven, who had sent him to fetch his daughter, and with a brief good-night he hastens away.

"Papa seems changed," muses the girl, wearily, and unconsciously uttering her thoughts aloud.

"Aye, but he is changed," assents Jenifer. "That woman's turned his head with her flatteries, but he'll find his mistake out when it's too late."

To this Constance makes no reply. The horror of that tragedy in the railway train swallows up more trivial and more personal feelings, and she closes her eyes again and tries to sleep.

After awhile she succeeds, and when she awakes in the morning the feverish symptoms have left her, her headache also has departed. She rises, pulls up her blind, and looks out upon the sea.

The sun shines brilliantly, but the wind is high, and far out to sea the waves are crested with angry foam, while they dash in upon the shore in such volume and with such a roar that the sound reaches her ears even at this distance.

"I will go down on the sands directly breakfast is over," she muses. "No doubt the walk will do me good, and I might hear something about that poor man who was thrown out of the railway carriage. By this time something must be known about him."

Her father meets her at breakfast, kisses her absently, remarks that she is looking better, and then devotes himself to his coffee and outlets as though he were too hungry to talk.

Presently, having nearly finished, he asks, carelessly,—

"What kind of a journey had you yesterday?"

"Journey!" echoes Constance, averting her head to hide the sudden pallor that has come over her countenance.

"Yes, journey," repeats her father, impatiently. "You travelled from London, didn't you?"

"Yes, of course I did," she replies, recovering herself, and speaking rapidly, to hide her agitation, "and a miserable journey I had. Miss Barlow came with me to the station; but we were so late, the train was about to start, and I suppose the hurry and the loss of my luncheon gave me a headache. I never remember feeling so ill as I did last night."

"Yes, so I told Mrs. Treleven, and she excused you; but I promised to take you to call on her this morning," says the captain, nervously avoiding his daughter's eye as he speaks.

"But why, papa?" asks Constance, petulantly. "I don't like Mrs. Treleven!"

"But I do like her, and I am going to marry her!" retorts her father, his very nervousness making him seem overbearing and aggressive.

"Marry her!" repeats Constance, rising from her seat, and pressing her hand upon her forehead. "You will marry her and bring her here?"

"Yes, I shall marry her and bring her here," repeats Captain Carew, emphatically.

"And you will bring her son and daughters also?" asks the girl in a dazed manner which does not strike him.

"Well, I suppose they will come," is the less ready reply. "I could dispense with their society easily; but I suppose they will follow their mother."

"And where am I to be?" asks Constance, in a bewildered tone.

"Where? Why, here, of course, until you are of age!" replies her father, promptly. "The house is big enough for you all. When you are twenty-one you can do as you like,

and, thanks to the idiotic manner in which your mother's fortune was tied up, you will be a rich woman."

"Yes, there is some comfort in that!" sighs Constance, sadly; "but I shall not be of age for three years, and I know I shall be unhappy with those people; perhaps you will let me go and live with my aunt until then, papa?"

"Indeed I shall do nothing of the kind!" replies Captain Carew, sharply. "The five hundred a year I am allowed for your maintenance would go to your aunt if I consented to such a step, and my income will be sufficiently crippled when you do come of age without anticipating such an event."

Constance Carew's face hardens. Her father has always been cold to her. He has always seemed to resent the fact that he cannot touch the large fortune that was her mother's, beyond the sum of five hundred a year which is allowed to him by his late wife's trustees for his daughter's maintenance, while she is under his care.

She knows this, she knows from sad experience how impossible it is to make her father forget this fancied wrong, in which at any rate she had no part; but she never realised so completely as now, that she is only looked upon as a valuable piece of property, out of which as much as possible is to be squeezed, quite independent of her feelings on the subject.

"If you won't let me go, I suppose I must stay," she says, bitterly and disdainfully; "but if life becomes intolerable here, I shall run away."

Then she takes up a pretty cloth she is working for five o'clock tea, and, walking to the window, begins to sew.

Captain Carew, seated at the breakfast table with his newspaper in his hand, watches her in silence.

He is a good bit afraid of this big daughter of his. He is proud of her because she belongs to him, because she is an heiress, because she is so elegant and attractive; and though he does not show her the same affection that a more demonstrative man would, show, he loves her as much as any man can love any human being but the woman that enthralls him.

It was probably in the anticipation that he would soon marry after the death of his wife, that her fortune was tied up for his daughter with so many restrictions; but ten years have passed by since that event occurred, and now, to the surprise of his friends and acquaintances, the captain has fallen a victim to the charms of a widow who is certainly not more than a dozen years younger than himself.

How these things come to pass the wisest philosopher has failed to explain; we only know that one woman will infatuate a man who has been proof against the charms of dozens of her sex, and that beauty, intellect, virtue, or even youth, are none of them essential for the purpose.

Thus it happens that Captain Carew, at the age of sixty, is engaged to marry Mrs. Treleven, who pleads guilty to forty-seven, and the circumstances of her having two grown up daughters and one son does not daunt him.

Poor Constance had not anticipated anything of this kind on her return from school.

She had mentally planned out the life she would lead as mistress of her father's house.

Being fond of reading, and knowing well that her education is by no means perfect, she had meant to have masters to superintend her studies for at least three mornings in the week, and on the other three to learn cooking and become a good housekeeper.

Constance is fully imbued with the conviction that women of the present generation ought to be more in every condition of life than their grandmothers were before them; that they ought to be companions to their husbands and fathers, as well as good housekeepers and good mothers; that they have social duties to perform, duties even to the

world beyond their own immediate circle, and that it is the duty of every girl in every rank of life to prepare herself for her position.

And now all her plans are knocked on the head. She is not to be mistress here, she is not to order her life as she will; on the contrary, she is to be one of many, and is to be under the control of one whom she thoroughly dislikes.

These thoughts course through her mind as her fingers are mechanically working cross-stitch on the traced tea-cloth; and she rapidly and rashly decides upon the position she will assume in the miserable state of affairs which will follow her father's determination to bring home Mrs. Treleven for his wife.

Her father, looking at her, anticipating opposition, and thinking he will do best by being authoritative, says,—

"Put on your hat, and come round with me to call upon Mrs. Treleven. She expected you last evening!"

For a second or two there is silence. Then Constance says, in a low strained tone,—

"I don't want to disobey you, papa; but I object to call upon Mrs. Treleven. If you bring her here, of course I cannot help it; but if I go to see her, my doing so will imply that I am willing to accept her as a stepmother, and I am not."

Her father utters an angry exclamation, and she, thinking perhaps that entreaty may have more effect upon him than opposition, throws herself upon his breast and cries,—

"Papa, dear papa, don't marry this woman. She isn't a lady; she is loud and coarse, and her daughters are almost as ill-bred as herself. Oh, do think of what your life will be if spent with such a woman! Before you take such a fatal step think of yourself, and then think of me having to live under the same roof with such people!"

But Captain Carew is not to be entreated, the enchantment is upon him; and because he knows there is much truth in what his daughter says, he is the more angry, and he exclaims, hotly,—

"Lady or no lady, a better-hearted woman than Mrs. Treleven doesn't breathe, and I mean to marry her, say what you will against her."

"In that case I shall say nothing more," replies Constance, gravely.

And she continues her stitching, her father watching her angrily meanwhile.

"Then you won't come with me?" he asks, after a time.

"No, thank you, papa!" is the calm reply.

He bites the ends of his moustache savagely.

Then he says,—

"I suppose you will be civil to them, and will make them feel at home if they come here?"

"Yes, I am always polite to people in my own house," she replies briefly, fearing her acquiescence may be framed into an invitation.

Then she leaves the room, and soon afterwards Captain Carew goes off to pay his morning call upon the lady of his choice.

He is quite beaming when he returns a few hours later, and he says, almost affectionately,—

"Mrs. Treleven quite understands your feelings, Connie, and she says she is sure you will soon get over your prejudice against her. She is not going to stand upon ceremony with us, but is coming in this evening to dinner."

"To dinner!" echoes the girl; "there is nothing ordered."

"On you there is!" replies her father with a smile. "I called on two or three of the tradespeople, and ordered things as I came in. And, by the way, my dear, it isn't worth while for you to take the housekeeping into your hands. We'll potter along as we have done until a decided change comes. Cook and I understand one another, and old Jenifer won't take the same high hand with me as she would with you."

"Very well, papa," is the dejected answer.

Here is another of her castles toppled down before she had quite finished building it.

She had looked forward, even when she was at school, to having a key basket, and taking the management of her father's house. She even flatters herself that she could order a very good dinner, and she has positively revelled in the idea of having a good store-room.

And now all this is knocked on the head before the keys have been in her possession a single day, and even this brief power is to be taken from her.

But pride prevents her from making any protest, and she is silently struggling with her mortification, when her father says,—

"Ah! yes, I had almost forgotten to tell you. I met Sir Wilfred Marshall just now, and he asked after you, and said he was glad you were at home, so I invited him to come in this evening. I did say come to dinner, but he said he would look in for an hour afterwards."

Sir Wilfred Marshall coming here this evening?" cries Constance, in dismay.

"Yes, why not?" asks her father, curtly.

He fancies she objects to the Baronet's presence in company with Mrs. Treleven and her family; but Constance is thinking of that scene in the tunnel not a couple of miles distant, and of the brief glance she caught of Sir Wilfred's face as he hurried past and out of the station yesterday.

"Nothing; only I didn't think he would care to come," she replies, evasively.

Then she hastens to her own room, devoutly wishing that she had some valid excuse for staying there, or for going away from the house so that she might avoid meeting this woman who is to be her step-mother, and the man whom she believes to have been guilty of a fearful crime.

And yet only yesterday morning she had looked forward eagerly to being at home in her father's house, and to again seeing Sir Wilfred Marshall.

"I wonder Sir Wilfred cares to come. I wonder he can or dare go anywhere," she thinks with dread. "I might have been mistaken, might have thought I had dreamed it all, if it had not been for the blood on the seat of the carriage; that was undeniable enough. I have the stain of it still upon my handkerchief, and I seem to have smelt blood and dreamed of blood from that hour to this."

She covers her face with her hands, and tears well into her eyes. The thought of this threatened step-mother is dreadful enough, but the conviction that between her and the man who has won her heart stands this undiscovered crime, takes from her all hope of release from the domestic discomfort she anticipates, and crushes all her secret dreams of happiness in the future. Coupled with this is the dread of punishment coming upon him for his crime, and of serious consequences upon herself for her silence, and these feelings torment her like vindictive demons, robbing her life of all that can make it enjoyable.

A message from her father requesting her to come and give him his afternoon cup of tea rouses her from her depression, and she complies mechanically; but there is something in her face and manner so strange that the Captain is annoyed, believing that it is caused by resentment against his choice, and he says, sharply,—

"I hope you will put on a decent gown and appear more cheerful than this when my friends come. You are looking as solemn as a mute at a funeral."

"Yes, I feel like one," she replies, with a deep-drawn sigh; "but I will try to rouse myself, and if I fail you must please forgive me."

"But you must not fail," says her father, sternly. "I would not have Sir Wilfred Marshall see you with such a gloomy countenance as you have now for anything you could give me. He would go away with all sorts of ridiculous notions in his head, and I have very particular reasons for keeping on good

terms with him. Very particular—you understand me?"

Constance gives a shuddering assent, then escapes to her own room to prepare for the ordeal before her.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW THEY MEET.

CONSTANCE CAREW has obeyed her father's command, and has dressed herself for dinner. She is not in mourning, but she feels too sad to wear the pretty salmon-coloured silk dinner dress which Madame Blonde made and that suits her perfectly, so she takes out from her wardrobe a black lace gown, the half low bodice of which is thickly embroidered with crescents of fine jet bugles.

This gown has seen its best days, but nothing could be more becoming to her elegant figure, nothing could better show by contrast the smooth whiteness of her neck and arms, and the delicate tints of her proud and beautiful face.

None of these things strikes her, she is too much unnerved, too depressed to take pleasure in her personal appearance.

The two men upon whom she pinned her faith, and on whom depended her happiness, have both failed her.

With her father's second marriage she feels that she will be ousted from his heart; and until that tragedy in the tunnel is cleared up or explained away, she cannot and will not allow her thoughts to dwell lovingly upon Sir Wilfred Marshall.

Sir Wilfred has not actually proposed to her, but he said so much on the last occasion they met, that she felt very sure he would do so on the first opportunity, as soon as she had left school altogether; and now she dreads the declaration with something like terror, for which, until yesterday, she has been looking forward with secret hope.

Her father stares at her when she comes into the room; she looks so like her dead mother that he feels an uncomfortable sensation in the region of the heart, and he relieves his feelings by saying in a tone of disapproval,—

"I hate black; have you nothing else to wear?"

"Yes, but I prefer this," she replies, gently.

"I am not at all well to-day, and I cannot dress in colours."

Whereupon Captain Carew shrugs his shoulders and marches out of the room. He does not want another contention with his daughter, and she has yielded so far that she has dressed and is waiting to receive his guests.

Poor Constance feels like a stranger in her father's house, she has had nothing to do with the ordering of the dinner, nothing with the arrangement of the table; the Captain and cook have decided the first between them, and the Captain and gardener have cut and arranged the flowers, while old Janifer and the young housemaid have looked after the plate and table-linen.

"I am just a mere nobody," thinks the proud girl, bitterly. "They none of them want me, I have not a voice in anything. Oh! I was far, far happier at school. I wish I had never left it. I wish I were with Miss Barlow still. Miss Mary used to be very cross sometimes, but I didn't care for her, and Miss Carzle was always amiable; and then there were Maggie and Edith, and many others of whom I was so fond."

She pauses, suddenly recollecting something, and exclaims in a tone of vexation,—

"I promised to write and say I reached home safely; well, I must do it to-morrow. And I likewise vowed that I would write daily to Hilda Turnbull, and tell her all about my life here, and fix a date for her to come and visit me. But that is all changed now, I could not invite her if I would, and I dare not write the thoughts and fears that fill my

heart. No, it isn't possible. My girlhood and my girlish hopes left me yesterday when I stepped into that railway carriage at Paddington."

She bows her head, an expression of intense sorrow comes over her beautiful countenance; and at this moment the door opens, and Mrs. Treleven enters, accompanied by Captain Carew and followed by her son and youngest daughter.

The sorrow gives place to a sweet gravity on Constance Carew's face; she rises and advances with cold courtesy to receive her father's guests.

"How do you do, Mrs. Treleven?" she says, extending her hand, and by her perfectly composed manner relieving that lady of the doubts as to whether or not she ought to kiss her.

"I'm quite well, thank you, and glad to see you home again," is the reply. "You know my daughter Nellie, and my son James;" and she waves her hand in the direction of her offspring, then walks off with the Captain to the farther end of the room to look at a picture.

Constance shakes hands with the two young people, whom she knows slightly, and she might have some difficulty in making conversation, if Nellie Treleven, who is rather given to gabble, did not exclaim in her usually effusive style.

"Oh! I am so glad to meet you again, Miss Carew. I do hope we shall be very good friends. Mother was quite vexed that you were not well enough to come and see us last night."

"It is very kind of her," Constance feels obliged to reply.

"I suppose your journey upset you, didn't it?" pursues Nellie, whose tongue, once set going, scarcely knows when to stop.

"Yes, I suppose it did," replies our heroine, trying to speak indifferently.

"It must have upset somebody else very much more than it did you," here James Treleven remarks, with such significant meaning in his voice that Constance is thrown off her guard, and asks, with undisguised anxiety,—

"Why? What has happened?"

"I don't know if I ought to tell you," replies the young man, doubtfully. "It isn't exactly the subject that one would have started."

"Tell me what is, if you can," says Constance, with such evident eagerness, that he replies,—

"There isn't much to tell after all. When the train, by which you travelled from London, reached Newton Abbot, the next station to this, you know, a porter, opening a carriage door for some people to get in, found the compartment spattered with blood and pieces of broken glass. They also found a railway novel with the name 'Constance' written inside."

"How horrible!" exclaims the girl who bears this name. "Did they find anything else, anything to explain it?"

"No, nothing as yet," is the answer. "The police have taken the matter in hand, but everything is wrapped in mystery. The guard of the train declares that a lady and gentleman travelled in that compartment from London; while one of the men engaged at the station at Dawlish, says there were two men in that compartment when the train left there. Here at Teignmouth nobody seems to have looked into the carriage at all."

"It's very unpleasant," remarks Constance, with a shudder, while Nellie Treleven exclaims,—

"Yes, do let us talk of something more cheerful. By the way, you are not over-pleased with that little arrangement, are you?"

She nods her head in the direction of the mature couple at the farther end of the room, and Constance, who is not a little surprised at such an outspoken question, replies, frankly,—

"How can I be expected to be pleased with it?"

"Well, that's just my feeling," assents Nellie. "I think it is preposterous for people at their time of life to think about getting married; they'd much better think about being buried."

"Oh, I don't say that," expostulates Constance.

"Don't you?" continues Nellie. "Well, then I do. We were awfully savage with mother, and we told her so plainly. We don't want a stepfather lording it over us. But it was of no use; you might as well try to turn the tide back when it is coming in. And we're worse off than you are, for Kate and James and I can't touch a penny of father's money while mother lives, and you will be free to do as you like when you come of age."

"Yes, but I have three years to wait before that time arrives," assents Constance, dolefully.

"Oh, three years isn't much," says Nellie, cheerfully. "James is going to London for three years to study art; folly, isn't it, with our father's practice going a-begging as it were, and only managed by the junior partner?"

"Ah, yes; your father was a solicitor, was he not?" responds Constance.

"Yes, the head of the firm, and a very good practice he had too," replies Nellie; "and if James would step into his place, he might soon be a rich man."

"I hate the chicanery of the law," here James Treleven interposes, "and I dislike the restraints of office work."

"Yes, there's the rub," asserts Nellie; "he dislikes restraint, so now he is going to London to become a great artist, and for three years the chance of returning and becoming a partner in the firm will be open to him."

"They may as well close it at once," says James, disdainfully. "I shall never become a lawyer, I dislike the work too much."

Constance makes no comment upon this, and Nellie Treleven remarks,—

"You know it will be the wisest plan for you and for us to make the best of this arrangement," with a nod in the direction of the elderly couple. "Ma isn't a bad one to get along with if you let her have her own way, and I don't suppose your father is very peppery if you don't cross him."

"Oh no, papa is amiable enough," returns Constance, and then she says no more on the subject. The idea of having to yield to Mrs. Treleven is still too distasteful to be considered dispassionately.

Fortunately, at this moment, dinner is announced, and presently the party of five are seated in the handsome dining-room, and Constance, recognising the worldly wisdom contained in Nellie's remarks, compels herself to be cheerful in countenance, and even cordial in manner to her unwelcome guests.

They, on their part, are quite ready to go more than half way towards friendliness. Mrs. Treleven, indeed, becomes almost affectionate in her behaviour towards her future stepdaughter; and Captain Carew takes the first opportunity after their return to the drawing-room of saying in a low tone, to his daughter,—

"Thank you, dear, I knew you would try to please me."

Constance gives him a pathetic glance—a glance that reminds him of her dead mother—then she turns to the piano to comply with Mr. James Treleven's request for a song.

She is still singing when Sir Wilfred Marshall is announced.

The drawing-room is a long one. The piano at which she is seated is at the farther end from the door, and consequently, Constance does not know that the Baronet is in the room, until, having finished her song, she rises, turns, and for the first time perceives him.

She has nerved herself for this meeting, and yet her colour comes and goes quickly. She hesitates to give him her hand, though polite-



["I MEAN TO MARRY MRS. TRELEVEN, SAY WHAT YOU WILL AGAINST HER!" SAID CAPTAIN CAREW.]

ness compels her to do it, and she looks into his eyes with a questioning gaze which puzzles him almost as much as it puzzles Mrs. Treleven, who likewise observes it.

Sir Wilfred is a tall fine man of two or three and thirty. For a few years before he succeeded to the title he had been in the army, and he still has a certain military air about him, which many of his lady friends consider very fascinating.

His hair is auburn, his eyes are blue, his features are large and regular, and with the exception of a well trained moustache, many shades lighter than his hair, his face is closely shaven.

He owns Nucombe Park close by, and he and Captain Carew have been on very friendly terms ever since he came to live here on the death of his uncle three years ago.

Constance was only fifteen then, and has since spent most of her time at school; but he has seen her at intervals, has admired her greatly, and is almost, though not quite, sure that he loves her.

Eight months have now elapsed since they last met, and Constance stands before him tonight as a new revelation of gentle and womanly loveliness.

Her rapidly changing colour, her questioning eyes, her slightly parted lips, her tall, elegant breathing form, so graceful and willowy, yet so queenly in its dignity, all appeal to his imagination, while there is about her a subtle charm which makes captive his heart on the spot.

A fire seems to rush through his veins, the wild fever of love thrills every nerve and fibre of his body, and then he finds himself taking her hand in his own, and releasing it reluctantly, while Captain Carew says with impress-

ment.

"You know Mrs. Treleven, Sir Wilfred?" How he gets through the rest of that evening Sir Wilfred does not know. It remains vaguely upon his mind that, after the first doubtful greeting, Constance rather shrinks from him,

or rather, he feels that her will would compel her to avoid him, if some subtle power which she is too weak to combat did not draw her eyes and thoughts towards himself.

He is not perfectly happy through it all. No man in love ever is happy until he knows his passion is returned, and that all obstacles that stand between him and the object of his choice are removed.

But still there is a fascination in the very presence of Constance, and although Mrs. Treleven and her daughters make great demands upon his attention, and he feels uncomfortably jealous at the manner in which Mr. James Treleven devotes himself to Constance, he still cannot tear himself away until the other guests are departing.

Then he tries to linger in his adieu, but Constance shrinks from him, as though she would avoid giving him her hand at parting if she knew how to do so.

But he takes this reserve on her part as a good omen for the success of his suit, as a mute acknowledgment that his passion is reciprocated; and when he at length leaves the house, he seems to walk upon air, so light is his heart, so happy does he feel under the glamour which this timid girl's eyes have cast over him.

As for Constance Carew, she says adieu to her guests, and even submits patiently when Mrs. Treleven and her daughter embrace her, then she kisses her father, and escapes to her own room, declining the help of old Jenifer.

She wants to be alone; and when the door is locked, and no human eye can see her agony, she flings herself upon a couch at the foot of her bed, and covering her face with her hands she groans inaudibly.

"He is guilty, I saw it in his face, I noticed how he started and turned pale when Mrs. Treleven referred again to the state of the railway carriage when it reached Newton Abbot, and I saw him give a furtive glance at me when he heard that I had come down by the same train; but he said nothing about

being in it himself, though I saw him leave that very carriage, and he only can say what really took place in it!"

She glances round the familiar room hoping vainly that she is the victim of some nightmare, from which she will presently awaken; but this hope speedily deserts her, and she bows her head again, and wrings her hands helplessly as she moans,—

"Yes, he is guilty; and, O Heaven, I love him!"

This is to her the most terrible part of it all: she loves him, and, because she loves him, she will remain silent, will allow a murderer to go unpunished for his crime.

But though her love will make her keep his secret, and will thus make her in the eyes of the law his accomplice, it will not make her give him her hand across this dead or blood. No, though she love him with all her heart, and soul, and strength, she cannot consent to share her lot with one upon whose brow is the brand of Cain.

So this night, which to him is so bright with love and hope for the future, is to her the darkest and most terrible she has ever spent!

(To be continued.)

THE activity which the Queen displays is really surprising. Those who are much younger would most of them feel great fatigue in travelling, even in a saloon car, from Southampton to Balmoral—nearly two day's journey. However luxuriously a Royal saloon may be fitted up, the eternal and wearisome grind of the wheels cannot be entirely smothered—there is always some vibration, and the stoppages tend to "murder sleep." When at Osborne her Majesty spends much of her time in the open air, invariably breakfasts in a little wooden house on the lawn, constructed with sliding panels, so that the Royal occupant has free air to breathe while sheltered from the prevailing wind.



["VALERIE," NOEL SAID HOARSELY, "I LOVE YOU!"]

NOVELLETTE.]

WHERE THE WATER LILIES GROW.

CHAPTER I.

"Wee for love when his eyes shall be
Open'd upon reality." L. E. L.

A SUMMER sky without a cloud to mar its deep azure, dazzling to the eyes, which pierced through the overhanging green and gold of majestic trees; a stretch of calmly-flowing water, fringed by rushes and meadow-sweet, with forget-me-nots creeping down to kiss the slow-rippling stream; a patch of water lilies golden and white; and then, to make the scene perfect, just a bit of human life—a man and a maid seated in a roomy boat moored close by the lilies.

The man, perhaps, was twenty-five, goodly to look upon, albeit eyes and mouth too spoke of a latent cruelty—the features were as clearly cut as those of a Greek statue, and from under level, black brows looked thoughtful intensely brown eyes.

It was a face that impressed one with its power, its intellect and refinement; and when the mouth smiled one would not have that face changed in anything—even the sallow complexion seemed natural to it. Who could imagine Noel Glynn with a skin fair as a woman's?

The girl was younger than he by some six years—she could not possibly have been more than nineteen. She was small and slight, with a delicate high-bred face, curly brown hair, hazel eyes, and the most kissable mouth under the sun. She was not pretty, although most folks called her so. She had not a regular feature, and yet she was so attractive that the young men of Ingatedell who were not fortunate enough to know her sighed for an introduction.

The mobile face, the ever-varying expression of her clear eyes, had a charm all their own—the eyes were a power in themselves. Just now she had raised them to Noel's—they looked deeper and darker by reason of the shadow thrown over them by the broad-brimmed hat she wore.

"Ingatedell," she said, softly, "has no levellier spot than this. I was never fond of the country until we came here. It takes time to get used to the solitude and quiet."

"Then," said Noel, "you have lived in some big place?"

"Our home was at Canterbury. I daresay you would not think it a very lively place, but I love it. I believe I like all things ancient, and it used to make even me feel good to live under the shadow of the grey cathedral walls. But I was ill, and a stupid doctor ordered change of air, and papa sent me down here. He was obliged himself to go to Cuba on business, and he felt we should be safer here. Oh, dear! if you knew how ridiculous I was when I first came, how you would laugh. I dared not walk alone through the fields or stroll down by the river. I always had an awful sense that someone was near, and would either stab me or throw me into the water. Constitutionally I am a coward."

"You ridiculous child!" indulgently. "But, of course, you have overcome these fears now?"

"Except at night; and then, no matter how brightly the moon may shine, I would not venture out alone for a king's ransom. I think to make a moonlight walk safe or pleasant in the country one requires a multitude."

Noel laughed.

"I'm not partial to a crowd." Then he said, meditatively, "I wonder how you would like London?"

"I've an impression I should hate to live there. The noise and bustle would confuse me, and the squalor one could not help to see would make me wretched."

"You forget what vast resources of pleasure

it has. Just think how good it would be to revel in the music of the opera—the joy of seeing a really good play—"

"Oh!" she interrupted, smiling, "you will think me quite a barbarian, but I frankly confess I should not care the least little bit for the opera. I know no language but my own. When I was a child I was very weakly, and papa refused to allow me to study much; but as music was a real passion with me, he did not forbid me to practise that. But I would like to attend a really good theatre—and I dearly love a circus."

"Most children do," said Noel, drily, but his eyes smiled. "I used to in the remote days of my juvenility."

"I suppose you are terribly antiquated? You remind me of Maud's lover, who says,—

'Ah! what shall I be at fifty,
Should Nature keep me alive,
If I find the world so bitter
When I am but twenty-five?'

and sometimes, too, like Maud's poor lover, you are very bitter. I fall to wondering if you have had false friends."

"Suppose I had, Val, what then? Yes, little girl, I have not found too much constancy in the world; and yet perhaps the fault has been more my own than that of my friends—I expected more of them than I could give. I am a jealous fellow, and I must be all or nothing to the man or woman who wins my affection. Divided regard will not satisfy me."

"I don't think," said the girl, thoughtfully, "that I am jealous—that is, if there were one I loved, I would not doubt that one without just and sufficient cause."

As she spoke, the hot blood flashed over throat and brow, and the hands that held the water lilies trembled even as the wind-stirred meadow-sweet.

Noel bent forward and kissed her. neither repulsed him nor returned his caress

but the colour in her cheeks faded as quickly as it had come, and her lips quivered.

With a little smile he possessed himself of her hands.

"Val, shall you miss me when I am gone?" he asked, in lover-like tones.

"Yes," she answered, steadily. "We have been good friends."

"And our summer has been a pleasant one," he went on. "I shall think of it often when I am back in town."

"When do you go?" she asked, and not all her efforts could hold her voice firm then.

"Next week. After such a blissful season of 'do-nothingness,' it will be hard to get into harness again. I wonder what you will do with yourself throughout the winter? It will be awfully lively here!"

"Perhaps," she said, looking up demurely, "I shall not stay at Ingatedell. I may even go to town for a short time. Shall I see you then?"

"I do not know," in a changed tone; "we may be far apart. London is a big place, Valerie, and no doubt you will find so much pleasure to engross your time and thoughts, that you will forget all about me, and our foolish, happy times."

A hurt look darkened her clear eyes. "I shall not forget," she said, and in her heart there was a sudden sense of unrest and pain.

He had been all in all to her of late. Did he wish, in parting from Ingatedell, to part also and for ever with her? Surely he loved her! She had not been vain enough to imagine affection where no affection was!

"What are you thinking?" asked Noel, with a quick glance at the downcast face.

"Why are you so suddenly quiet?"

"Oh, I have an occasional meditative mood," she answered, looking up swiftly. "I am not always rattle-pated," and then she laughed as never in her young life had she laughed before; and her companion, recognising that new note in her voice, stirred restlessly in his seat.

"The sun is getting low," she said, a moment later, "and my lilies are wanting water. Let us start for home."

"Why this hurry, Val? We shall not have many more jaunts together."

She looked back over her shoulder at the shining waters.

"All pleasant things come to an end, and I shall be expected at home! Ah, see how lovely it all is! Will I ever find anything so fair again?" When she turned once more to him, her lips were smiling, but her eyes were sad.

In silence he rowed down the quiet stream. They met no one on their way, and coming to a sequestered spot where the bank sloped gently to the river, Noel Glynn assisted his companion to land, and a moment stood beside her.

"Good-bye, little Val. It has been a delightful afternoon. If you are very good, we will have a repetition of it to-morrow."

His softened voice, the gentle touch of his hands upon her shoulders, brought back joy to her heart.

"Tell me how to be good, Mr. Glynn," she half-whispered.

"First you must call me Noel, and then you shall kiss me good-bye. You have never done so yet."

The tell-tale colour came and went in the fair sweet face, and with a quick instinctive gesture she drew back; but he still retained his gentle hold of her, and he felt that she was trembling like a chidden child.

"They are such easy things to do, Val; and wifful as you are, you are not cruel. Just one kiss, dear!"

She lifted her mouth to his.

"Good-bye, Noel!" she whispered, and tearing herself away, ran up the leafy way, and disappeared from his sight.

At a little distance she paused, breathless with the mad joy possessing her, and the haste she had made.

"He loves me! he loves me!" she said over and over again, and then such a sense of grateful reverence came upon her that she covered up her face and humbly thanked Heaven for this good gift.

When she was a little calmer she started slowly for the cottage. Mrs. Witham met her at the gate.

"My dear," she said, "I am half afraid whilst you are taking these long, solitary rambles."

The crimson blood flashed the girl's face as she passed the lady hurriedly.

"There is no need for fear, mamma; and now let us have tea. I ought not to keep you so long waiting."

The days and the hours sped by, until the last evening of Noel Glynn's stay at Ingatedell came.

Mrs. Witham had promised to dine with the Vicarage family; Valerie had excused herself on some slight plea, and very guiltily she felt as she left the house and went towards the trysting-place.

But after to-night there would be no need for concealment. To-night, before they parted, Noel would surely say the words that should openly make her his. Oh! he never could go in silence.

She thought of all their happy meetings, of every look and word of his, and tears rose to her eyes. He was her hero. He was all that was noble and good. How had she ever deserved the glory of his love? Ah! how she would worship and serve him all her life long. She never could repay him for the happiness he had given her! So she thought in the innocence of her young heart, and she knew who went to meet her communed with himself thus,—

"She is a dear little soul, clever and affectionate. I think she likes me fairly well; and, by Jove! it is lucky for me I am leaving at once. It would never do for me to mar my fortune by a hasty and imprudent marriage. I don't suppose she has anything, and I am too poor to take a penniless wife. I wish I had not gone quite so far. I should hate to think I had hurt her. I'm just perilously near loving her in downright earnest truth. There are times when I lose my head over her; but then she can't blame me if she suffers the least little heart-pang. She knows we were but flirting when our—our friendship began."

But he was angry and dissatisfied with himself, and consequently prone to visit his displeasure on the girl who loved him. That is man-like, isn't it?

They met at the old place—where the water lilies grew. It was already dusk, and the great white blossoms looked like stars as they rested upon the dark mass of leaves; the air was laden with the perfume of meadow-sweet, the scent of the creamy Clematis; and there by the favourite stile stood Valerie, gowned in purest white.

Her wistful face had never seemed so sweet to Noel Glynn as now, and never had her innocent eyes given him such welcome.

"You are first, Val," he said, and his voice was cold with his efforts at self-repression. "I am most ungallant; but I was detained on the road by a fellow I know. I left him as soon as I could. Little one, how white and weary you look! I suppose the heat has tired you?"

"Yes," she said, "it has been overpowering. When do you go—Noel?" The last word was spoken very timidly and unsteadily.

"To-morrow morning, by the nine-fifty train. So this is really good-bye, Val. It would be strange if we should meet again."

Her heart stood still. Would he leave her thus—she who loved him? she whose love he had done his best to win?

"Will you not come back?" she questioned, and now her voice was cold as his had been. "Not ever?"

"I think not. Like you, I came here to recuperate myself. I cannot afford any more holidays yet."

"I think," she said, quickly, "we are going to town shortly. Will you not call upon us then?"

"I think not. You see, I am a bachelor, and could make no return for any hospitality I might receive. We have been good friends, little Val, but we have each known that with the summer our friendship must close. We must each go our separate ways."

She looked at him then with wild eyes.

"Do you mean that you never wish to see me again? That you will not even write me when you are away?"

"I think it best to end all intercourse," he said, coldly and deliberately, intent upon killing her love, and holding fast to his resolve. "Do not summer flirtations always end so?"

He could not see her face, her head was drooped so low, and for awhile she did not speak; but presently she asked in a thin weak voice,—

"Did you respect me so little that you thought I was good sport for your idle hours?"

"Do not put it like that, Valerie. You must consider our relative positions—and remember, too, the clandestine nature of our meetings. I did not mean to hurt you. I thought that you, like myself, quite understood the footing upon which we stood. Let us part friends."

Silence awhile—trees and river seemed indistinguishably mixed as seen through the mist of Valerie's tears. But she did not allow these two bright drops to fall as she lifted her anguished eyes to his.

"Perhaps one day you will be sorry you valued my friendship—so little," she said. "I do not know—men are so cruel—and I did not guess what the end of this would be. You were wiser than I. You might have spared me a little if only because I was ignorant and young; but men care nothing about these things. Oh! I could have borne everything bravely, but the thought that you held me in such light esteem as to believe me guilty of a vulgar flirtation."

"Valerie!" and he stretched his hand to her, but she shrank back.

"Don't touch me! I could not bear it! There is nothing left for you to say but good-bye—that means 'God be with you!' You won't refuse to say that one little prayer in my behalf? See how the river runs on! I shall remember and shudder all my life over this picture before us—the tall green rushes, the bending trees—and I shall hate water lilies as long as I live! Now let me go. Take your arm from about me. We are not friends any more—and yet—oh! yet with all my heart I pray 'Heaven bless you!'"

"Valerie!" he said, "Valerie! do not leave me so. I did not guess how hard I had made things for you. I can only pray forgiveness, I can only hope you will forget."

"Women are so good at forgetting," she answered, bitterly, and left him.

CHAPTER II.

"Heavy is the lot of woman; heavy is her loving lot—

If it thus must share in common, love with those who know it not." L. E. L.

A YEAR had gone by, and how often in that time Noel Glynn had thought of Valerie Witham he would have been ashamed to say. He was not easy in his conscience about her. There were times when he meditated writing her, but that was when he had left Ingatedell some months, and he was not at all sure his letter would find her, for, like himself, she had been but a bird of passage.

They had met first at church, and their introduction had been effected by the friendly Vicar. After that there had followed chance and casual encounters, and perhaps neither of them could tell how they drifted into making appointments.

It had been a very pleasant time to Noel,

who had been fairly fascinated by this hazel-eyed girl. To do him justice, he was not that despicable creature a male flirt, and he had not intended matters should go so far.

He remembered Valerie now with a tenderness which, under favourable circumstances, might quickly develop into love. He wished she had been less in earnest. Sometimes he wished he had never bidden her good-bye; and he hated himself when he thought of that parting scene by the river, of the anguish on that young white face.

"It only she had been my equal, and I had not been so horribly poor! What could a struggling barrister do with a young wife, and a wife with no influence? Very likely she has a crowd of needy and disreputable friends, too. Witham! I never knew anyone of the name before. Poor little Val!" and then he tried, and always vainly, to forget her. "No doubt," he would say, when her memory so persistently haunted him, "no doubt she is reconciled to things now. Probably she is married to some worthy fellow in her own station."

It was July, but town was still full, and to Noel, in his grim chambers, the heat was almost insufferable; but he could not yet afford to take his annual vacation owing to a sudden and rare overpressure of work.

As he walked down the Strand, he found himself wishing for some little break in the monotonous round of his life; and before his mind's eye rose a perfect vision of the shining river, the branching trees, and the pure fair face of Valerie, as he stooped once—how long ago it seemed!—to kiss her. A voice by his side startled him.

"Flowers, sir? Don't say no! Look at these lovely lilies. Threes—a penny, sir. Cheap as dirt!"

He half-stretched out his hand to take the waxen blossoms; then with a flash Valerie's words came back to him, "I shall hate water lilies as long as I live," and dropping a penny into the girl's hand he passed hurriedly on, angry that he should be reminded at every turn of the little girl who had spoken those words.

He had not gone far when he was again greeted; this time in a man's voice.

"Hallo, Glynn! what a brown study you're in. I'll vow you would have passed without seeing me, only I was too quick for you. Where are you going?"

"Nowhere in particular. I came out for a stretch, not feeling quite like work this morning."

"Just my condition," laughed Jack Stannard, who was supposed to be studying medicine. "I'll take a turn with you. By the way, have you any engagement to-night? No? That is jolly. Look here, you shall go with me to my aunt's ball. Mrs. Antrobus, you know. I've carte blanche to take any chum, and you're a favourite with her."

"You're awfully good, Stannard; but balls are not in my line."

"Oh, nonsense! You shut yourself up until you are growing a confoundedly misanthropical recluse. I won't take a refusal; and I say, Glynn, I want you to come if only to see Miss Yorke."

"And who is Miss Yorke?" questioned Noel, drawingly.

"Oh, you Gosh! It is culpable ignorance not to know. She is the only daughter and heiress of Outhbert Yorke the millionaire, and the prettiest, wittiest girl about town. All the fellows are raving over her. You won't refuse to come now. I—so particularly wish you to know her!"

"You are enthusiastic, Jack! Is it a case with you at last?"

"Oh, shut up!" was the polite response. "Can't a fellow admire a girl without falling in love with her?"

"That depends on the fellow's self-control a good deal, and the lady's powers of fascination still more," laughed Noel, with a little bitter sense of his own shortcomings in the past. But you, Stannard, are so lucky that

you may even aspire to an heiress without fear of presumption. Well, just to oblige you I'll put in an appearance to-night, but I do not promise to stay; and possibly the divinity will disappoint me."

"If she does, I'll eat my head!"

Night came, and the friends went together to Mrs. Antrobus's. They were a little late, but Miss Yorke had not yet arrived, and Noel, who was not partial to this form of entertainment, discovering a cool recess, ensconced himself there, and was really half asleep when Stannard found him.

"You lazy brute," he said, with his usual forcible language, "get up. Miss Yorke has arrived, and I want to introduce you. She has given me permission to present 'my friend' to her. If you don't look sharp, you won't stand any chance of getting a dance, the fellows are filling her tablets as fast as they can!"

"I don't wish to dance," Noel said, lazily. "It is too hot, and I don't care about whirling round in a crowd; but I don't mind knowing Miss Yorke."

"You're confoundedly condescending! Look, do you see that little girl all in white; Antrobus junior is just leaving her—that is Yorke's daughter! What the deuce? I say, Glynn, what is up with you?"

"I am either drunk or dreaming. I know her—but not as Miss Yorke! Stannard, you are having a hoax with me!"

"On my oath no! I am as much surprised as you to find you are acquaintances; I don't understand it all—perhaps when you have spoken with her you'll explain the mystery—come on!"

The little knot of men gathered about two ladies, made way for the friends to pass, and in that moment the younger of them saw Noel. White as death went her mobile face, and instinctively she put up her fan to shield it a moment from his intent and startled look; but when he reached her side, she lowered it and met his eyes fully.

"Glynn tells me you are old acquaintances!" said Stannard, "so there is no need for me to play the part of M.C."

"We have met before," the girl answered, "long ago."

Her voice was quiet and low, her lips smiled, and her whole manner had the composure of a society woman.

"I don't understand," Noel began confusedly; she interrupted him with a little laugh.

"I suppose not. Mrs. Witham, you remember Mr. Glynn, we met him once or twice at Ingatedell? Oh, yes, I have one dance left; you may have that," and she tendered him her tablet.

She had given him a waltz very low down, and he had to possess his soul with patience until he could claim her. He saw men hovering about her—he could count her admirers by the score, and her lovers were not a few.

He was bewildered, dazed; he felt like one in a dream. He had known her, thought of her, come perilously near to loving her as Valerie Witham, a little obscure girl. He met her again as Valerie Yorke, the heiress of the great railway contractor. How pretty and bright she was! Evidently she had forgotten him and her old love! It was better so, and yet, man-like, he sighed for what he had cast so wantonly aside.

She was wearing white, her dress being composed of frosted tulle, with a bodice of satin; crimson roses were at her throat, crimson roses in her hand, and there were almost priceless pearls in the wavy masses of her dark hair. This was the girl he had spurned, in his pride, as being less than his equal.

At last his waltz came; he went to her side—she was a little flushed, but quite composed.

"Our dance?" she said, with a pretty smile. "I had half forgotten it."

She rose and laid her hand ever so lightly

upon his arm. He looked entreatingly at her.

"Miss Witham—Miss Yorke, will you let me take you to the conservatories—it is cooler there—or would you prefer to dance?"

"I am a little tired," she said, lightly. "We will adopt your suggestion. What a perfect hostess Mrs. Antrobus is!"

He made no reply, he was too engrossed by his own thoughts and with looking at her; and so, almost in silence, they entered the conservatories, and having secured a comfortable seat, he ventured to sink down beside her.

"I suppose," said Valerie, with calm eyes meeting his, "you are wondering what this transformation means? Perhaps, I owe it to you to explain, seeing that I deceived you as to my real identity."

She waited for him to speak, and at last he said slowly and with evident effort,—

"Tell me just as much or as little as you please; I do not deserve you should enlighten me."

"If we only got our deserts we should not be much in love with life," she answered, with the pretty smile he so well remembered, "and to-night I am inclined to be gracious. When we, Mrs. Witham and I, went down to Ingatedell, papa had gone to Cuba; did I tell you that before? and he specially wished I should see as little of the world as possible before his return, partly on account of my health, partly because he feared my prospective fortune might be dangerous to me. In a girlish freak I persuaded Mrs. Witham that it would be nicer to travel incognito—I was tired of being courted for my wealth—and from my earliest years she had been my companion, almost my mother—in fact, I always have called her mamma, never having known my own. And now the mystery is explained, I wonder if you will forgive my deception. It was innocent enough, and no one was hurt by it." She paused and looked at him—their eyes met.

"Miss Yorke," he said, with unaccustomed humility, "it is I who should ask forgiveness. I am afraid to think in what esteem you hold me."

She laughed ever so softly, ever so lightly. "Do you mean, if you had known my real position in society, you would have treated me as a different being?"

He flushed hotly.

"I did not mean that, Valerie."

"I ceased to be Valerie when I returned to my old life," she said, still carelessly. "You must get accustomed to remembering me as Miss Yorke. And now tell me about yourself."

"I have little to tell. I have not set the Thames on fire."

"But you are fairly successful, I believe," with that careless kindness which was worse than all to bear, which seemed to mean so little, coming from the lips that had held his once in a close kiss.

"Miss Yorke," he asked, surprised at his own audacity, and at that faint thrill of pain stirring his heart, "do you go to Ingatedell this year?"

"No; never any more, I hope. The place is insufferably dull."

"And yet you liked it once; and there are some lovely bits of scenery."

"Notably by the river side," she answered, meeting his eyes with a hardness of which she had never deemed herself capable; "but one wears of rusticity very quickly. I speak feelingly. And now let us go back, if you please; I have promised the next dance to Mr. Stannard. And if you have any wish to remain an acquaintance, you will never speak to me of Ingatedell again. I really have grown to loathe the place, and I want to forget I ever laid aside my proper pride and dignity. Now I am ready."

He had no right to appeal against her decision, or beg her to stay, if but a little while, with him. So he led her back to Jack Stannard, and watched with gloomy eyes

whilst she floated gracefully through the mazes of the dance; and he told himself he had been a brute to her, and a fool to himself.

He cared for her more than he had ever done, despite the alteration in her—perhaps because of it, for men always desire and strive for the unattainable.

All her sweet ingenuousness, which to him had been so great a charm, was gone; and he knew that he, and he alone, had wrought so great a change in her.

Full of regret, and a pain, no longer vague but growing with each waning moment, he went back to his solitary chambers long before the ball ended.

Where was the use of staying? She would vouchsafe him no further speech, nor did he deserve she should.

Believing her poor and obscure, uncertain of his own heart, he had ruthlessly left her to bear the misery he had wrought for her. Knowing her, rich and courted, how dare he approach her with protestations of love?

"I do not see your friend," said Val, lifting her radiant eyes to Stannard's face; "does he not care for pleasure, that he has left so early?"

"He is not exactly a social fellow; but he's awfully clever, and generous too. Did you know him very well, Miss Yorke?"

"No," she answered; "we never understood each other."

"Then you do not like him? I am sorry."

"I am simply indifferent to him," she answered, a slight flush rising to her cheek. "One is not prepared to like every man one meets. Will you take me to Mrs. Witham? It is growing late, and I confess I am dreadfully tired."

"Miss Yorke," he pleaded, "grant me one favour. Give me a flower that you have worn. You'll not refuse so much to one who would spend himself in your service?"

She hesitated a moment, whilst the colour came and went in her face, then she said,—

"You must not talk nonsense to me any more. There, take your flower, and let us say goodnight. No, I will not choose for you," and she held out her bouquet to him.

"Do you know how cruel you are at times?"

"Do you know, Mr. Stannard, how very angry you are making me? I almost regret my concession."

So he was fain to pluck a blossom for himself, and lead her back to Mrs. Witham.

He escorted them to their carriage, lingering to say,—

"When may I hope to see you again? Would you be at home to me if I called to-morrow?"

"Perhaps. If it is worth a trial, I give you permission to call," she answered, laughing coquettishly. "Good-night, Mr. Stannard."

She was very quiet throughout the homeward drive, and, pleading fatigue, went at once to her room; and there, dismissing the weary maid, she stripped off her finery, loosened the heavy masses of her hair, and looked with a bitter smile at her own reflection in an opposite pier-glass.

"When he thought me poor, I made sport for his idle hours," she said. "He regrets now that he was less in earnest. He values me according to my wealth, and I—oh! I am fool enough to love him yet. Heaven help me! I shall love him till I die!"

She drew a quick shuddering breath, then slowly, slowly sank upon her knees, hiding her tormented face in her hands; and so she remained a long, long while fighting with her pain and her love.

When, at length, she rose, she was as white as the dainty garments she had flung so carelessly by; but her eyes were dark as night with the burden of a grief almost too heavy for her to bear.

CHAPTER III.

"Nay, those two lovers are not anywhere; If we were they, none know us what we were, Nor aught of all our barren grief or glee! Thou couldst not watch with me,"
Swinburne.

In the days that followed, Noel saw much of Valerie Yorke; a sort of fever possessed him—he must follow her in her triumphant course, although it was cruel as death to see her bestow favours on other men, whilst he stood aside. He was miserable in her presence, he was doubly wretched and restless when away from her; retribution had come quickly to him, and he knew that he deserved his doom.

He did not now seek to excuse his own conduct; he only wished with all his heart to atone for it, and to win back the heart he thought he had lost. In August Mrs. Antrobus removed to her pleasant house in Berkshire, and insisted that he should accompany her.

"Jack, of course, goes with us," she said, "and Mr. Yorke, Mrs. Witham and Valerie have promised to swell our party. I want you to know Valerie well; you are not half such friends as I hoped you would be, but in the country you will have ample time to cultivate each other. You will come, Mr. Glynn?"

He knew how foolish he was to go near temptation, that his was the desire of the mesh for the star; but he gave the promise asked, and arrived three days later at the Berkshire mansion.

Val was the first person he saw; she did not know he was expected so soon, and had stayed at home on account of a headache. She was looking pale and languid; not even the pretty pink gown she wore could impart colour to her cheeks, but they flamed crimson as Noel was announced.

"I am so sorry," she said, courteously. "that Mrs. Antrobus and the house-party should be out. Papa is somewhere in the rear, but I think he is asleep, and he does not like to be disturbed. Will you go to your room?"

"I would rather remain here than thank you, unless you consider me intrusive."

"Not at all," and she moved away to a seat by the window, talking softly the commonest platitudes; she would not try to attract him by her wit—she dared not trust herself to be gracious to him, lest he should guess she loved him still. They passed a dreary half-hour together, and each was thankful when Mr. Yorke broke in upon their tête-à-tête.

"Mr. Glynn must really welcome your visit as that of an angel," Val said, laughing. "I am such a stupid companion to-day. I suppose I may go now?" and, waiting for no response, she glided away, whilst her father, a short, slight man, of a melancholy type, sat down to entertain Noel.

Most scrupulously did Val avoid him on every possible occasion, until even Mrs. Antrobus remonstrated with her.

"My dear, Noel Glynn is my ideal of young manhood; he is handsome, clever, ambitious, and best of all—honourable. Why do you so dislike and scorn him?"

"I never said I disliked him!" Val answered, with flaming cheeks, "but I refuse to see that I should devote my attention to him. It is one of my caprices not to follow the popular idol, and every one here idolises Mr. Glynn in a ridiculous fashion."

That day Mrs. Antrobus had planned a water party, and it chanced that Noel walked by Val. She was carrying a sunshade and a book; he offered to relieve her of the latter, but she declined curtly.

"Why will you never let me do anything for you?" he asked.

She, looking anywhere but at him, answered,—

"I am so fond of my independence!"

"But you allow Stannard and others to minister to your wants!"

"That is different; they are friends of old standing," and then she turned with a smile to Mrs. Witham who was near, "Won't you join us? you look so lonely," she said, "and Mr. Glynn and I haven't a single taste in common; it is really too bad Mrs. Antrobus should depute him to take care of me!"

A burning rage possessed Noel; but he could say or do nothing, and walked on beside her, miserably conscious that he had no right to expect any favour or concession from her.

Down the smooth flowing stream they went, Stannard securing some fine lilies which he placed in a basket and presented to Val. Noel, looking at her, saw the spirituelle face pale and quiver, just a moment, no more; then she said,—

"Thanks, they are very beautiful! What a pity they lack scent!" and she put them a little aside.

"One can't have everything!" Jack answered, disappointedly; "and water lilies are my especial favourites; they always bring before one's mental view a summer sky, a shining river, a boat gently heaving on the little ripples."

She looked up at him quickly; then she bowed her head over her book, but not before Noel had seen its expression. Memory had carried each back to Ingatell, and he felt she was not indifferent to him. Presently she lifted her eyes to Jack's vexed face.

"I shall certainly disgust you," she said, with a faint cold smile, "but I really have no love for rural life, its prettinesses and homely scenes. I never feel quite in my element."

And then she so sparkled and shone that her listeners forgot her previous speech, and Jack Stannard was in the seventh heaven of delight, until on the homeward walk Mrs. Antrobus sprained her ankle, and demanded his help, so that Val was left to Noel's care.

They had walked in silence some time when the young man said,—

"Do you know you have left your lilies in the boat?"

"I hate lilies," she retorted, with unaccustomed vehemence.

"You don't not always," he answered, hardly knowing what he said, because of the pain and regret consuming him.

She flashed upon him. Obviously Valerie Yorke was not a meek woman.

"How dare you remind me of a time it should be your shame to recall as it is mine? Will you never remember that Valerie Witham and Valerie Yorke are separate and distinct individuals?"

"I remember it every hour of my life. You give me no chance of forgetfulness. I know I behaved very badly to you then; but a man may repent his sin and be forgiven. Won't you show me a little mercy, Valerie?"

"You are bent upon recalling the past," she said, "as I am bent upon forgetting it. Why cannot you remember your rôle of casual acquaintance, and not presume so far as to question my every word and action, to ask for a friendship you know I can never give? Men are not generally so tenacious of woman's regard without some ulterior motive!"

He understood her, and was stricken to the heart. He deserved any bitter thing she might say; but none the less his heart cried out for mercy.

"Why should you be so cruel to me, so kind to others, Valerie?"

She confronted him with pale face and deep inscrutable eyes.

"We are not kindred spirits," she said, with a laugh. "It is nonsense to think we ever could agree on any given subject!" and then she went into the house, and he did not see her again until the dinner bell rang.

She was first in the drawing room, and he presently entered. She rose quickly as if to go away, but he refused to allow this.

"Valerie," he said, in a low voice harsh with emotion, "I will be heard. I must speak to-night or go mad. There is no time now,

the others are coming downstairs. Will you meet me after dinner in the Ladies Walk?"

"You have no right, sir, to ask an assignation!"

"Be merciful! I will not go without an interview!"

"You are taking a high hand; and I am sure nothing but discomfort can result from the meeting you ask; but I agree," and then she turned from him with a self-didainful gesture, and spoke to him no more throughout the dainty repast prepared for them.

She was a trifle pale, but beyond this she showed no sign of emotion, and she looked unusually pretty in her pale blue gown with the scarlet blossoms at throat and waist.

It was not hard to escape from the drawing-room, and, not staying for hat or wrap, she went to the Ladies Walk, where Noel was waiting her.

"You have come at last," he said, as his eyes rested on the pale small face and pretty head. "Let me fetch you a cloak, you will take cold."

She smiled a trifle bitterly.

"You forget how warm the nights are; and I am by no means a hot-house plant. Tell me what you have to say, and let me go at once!"

He turned to her suddenly, his face as white as her own.

"Valerie," he said, hoarsely, "I love you!"

Her arms dropped to her side with a tragic gesture. Her dark eyes met his fully, and then she questioned,—

"Since when, Mr. Glynn?"

"I know what you are thinking, and, alas! I cannot blame you. You believe I have discovered my love, only since I discovered your wealth. It is my own fault that you doubt me; but by my life, Valerie, I have only spoken truth. Look into my eyes and read it there."

"Once," she said, with a heavy sigh, "I did that, and I thought I saw your soul shining there. I thought that I read love in your face, and I found myself deceived. With that 'summer flirtation' our friendship ended. You would not even grant me the consolation an occasional letter would bring. You bade me remember our relative positions—"

"I was a conceited fool! Forgive me, Valerie!"

She went on pitilessly.

"Every word you spoke then remains with me now. I think of what had gone before. I think of every cruel speech you made, until I am consumed with shame, until I so loathe myself that I wish I could die! You spoke of 'our clandestine meetings'; you said 'you thought I understood the footing upon which we stood.' Oh! how could you be so cruel? You were a man of the world, I an ignorant girl!"

"Forgive me, dear," he pleaded, "for my love's sake!"

"Your love's sake!" she said, under her breath. "Oh, do not try again to deceive me! You taught me a bitter lesson. Never in my life can I forget it. I wish I could! I wish I could! I used not to be so hard and unbelieving; but it is Valerie Yorke you love, not Valerie Witham!"

"As Heaven is above us, no!"

"If," she said, slowly and wearily, "if you could give me back my old innocent, ignorant heart, I might believe you, I might listen to you; but that you cannot do, and so to-night and for all time we will say good-bye!"

"No! Valerie, you love me! I know you do. You cannot honestly deny that!"

"I do not," she answered, with a flash of passion, "it would be vain, and I have some regard for truth. I wish, oh, with all my heart I wish I could kill my most unhappy love. I wish I could forget you as easily as you forget me. Oh, why would you speak again of this? Why did you not leave me some chance of forgetfulness?"

"I love you too well, Valerie. Can't you credit me with a little truth and honesty? Won't you try me—I don't care how hard the

test may be, I swear I will not fail. Oh, my sweet, in the old days I listened only to the worldly reasonings of my mind, I would not heed my heart. I could not guess how I should hunger again for you, keep your wealth, I ask none of it; but for the love of Heaven, give me yourself!"

She was shaken by his words; all her soul yearned towards him. Half instinctively, she lifted her arms as though to embrace him; but they fell again.

"No," she said, "we should be wretched; for I never could trust you. You failed me once: I will not put it in your power to fail me again!"

"Forgiveness of all sins is possible to love!" he pleaded.

"It may be so," she answered, wearily, "I cannot tell. Oh! if I dared trust you again, I should be most blest. If by some lucky chance I could lose all that I possess, I should know then that you loved me for myself. Under no other circumstances would I give myself to you. Doubt would make our marriage a wretched thing. And so, Noel, it must be good-bye!"

"You shall not leave me so. Soon or late I will win you, my darling! my darling! Soon or late you shall acknowledge that in this thing at least I was true. I do not yield up my claim to you!"

"You have no claim. Oh, Noel, I have borne so much; you have made me suffer so long. Let me go now. The pain is almost more than I can bear!"

"Then why will you endure it. Love relent, forgive!"

"I do forgive you," she said, gently; "but I cannot trust you, and therefore we must part. Think as kindly of me as you can; and—and when you are happily married, perhaps once more we may be friends. Until such a time, I hope we may never meet again!"

He snatched her hands to his breast. Her head drooped low.

"Tell me!" he cried, "if, still loving me, you will marry some other—Jack Stannard, perhaps? You show him favour!"

"I don't know. I hardly understand myself. Perhaps I may yet find shelter in some good man's love; but not yet, oh! not yet, whilst my heart cries out for you. Noel, Noel! I wish we had never met. I wish I had died before you taught me this bitter lesson!"

He had her fast in his arms, then; he had never loved her so dearly as now, when he felt she was slipping from him, out of his life for ever. He kissed her lips; she did not return his caress; perhaps she dared not. He called her by every endearing name; she only lay mute in his embraces. And so at last he realised that all his hopes were vain—that she was deaf to his entreaties, unmoved by his caresses. He released her then.

She was white as the jasmine blossoms above her. All her strength had deserted her, and her heart was like lead in her breast.

"Good-bye, Valerie," he said; "it maybe you have decided wisely. I cannot tell; I only know I deserve my fate. I only hoped you would be merciful. Heaven bless you, dear, and teach you forgetfulness of the past, and me!"

A sob rose from her heart to her lips with iron will she kept it back.

"Good-bye!" she answered, "I never shall forget! and oh I pray you to believe that my thoughts of you will not be bitter ones, that never never shall I cease to pray for and love you. I only cannot trust you, and so we must part; for love without esteem is a curse and not a blessing!"

"You have decided. Valerie, will you kiss me once before I go?"

A shuddering cry broke from her. In the old days he had pleaded, "Just one kiss, dear," and she had given it in hope and joy. Now she lifted her mouth to his, and, in token of everlasting farewell, kissed him once; then slipping from his embrace, she went quickly towards the house, and up to her own room.

Her maid met her. With a little wailing cry, she put out her hands blindly.

"I am ill, Clara. Help me—I—oh, Heaven!" and then she fell in a huddled heap upon the floor, her face hidden in her outstretched arms, and all her pretty finery tumbled, the scarlet petals of the flowers she wore scattered all round about her.

It was late when she woke next morning, after a night of troubled sleep, and Mrs. Witham was beside her.

"My dear," she said, solicitously, "are you better indeed? You gave us a sad scare last evening."

"I am better," Val said, wearily. "I shall be all right presently. I am going to get up."

"Rest a little longer. Clara shall bring up your breakfast. By the way, dear, I am sorry you were not down to say good-bye to Mr. Glynn. He left quite unexpectedly this morning. Business, I suppose, called him away."

CHAPTER IV.

"How shall all this be told?"

All the sad sum of wayward days;

Heart's anguish in the impenetrable maze."

D. G. Rossetti.

A fortnight later the Yorkes left Berkshire, preparatory to a trip round the Shetlands and Orkneys. Quite a snug party they were to make, for Mr. Yorke's yacht was commodious.

Mrs. Antrobus and Jack Stannard were invited; a couple of young military officers, and two pleasant girls, with Mrs. Witham to play propriety of course.

Of late her friends had thought Valerie looking pale and ill, and the anxious father had planned this excursion simply and solely on her behalf. His whole affection was centred upon her, and he poured out money like water for anything which might give her pleasure.

She moved and spoke languidly, and her smiles were infrequent.

"The season has tried you too severely," said Mr. Yorke, with a worried glance at her, "and we were not so quiet as we might have been when in Berkshire. My dear, you really must husband your strength. It would be awful to lose you."

She smiled as she gently put one arm about his neck.

"Dear father, you are troubled about me without cause. I am really not ill; and when once we have started on our cruise, I shall recover my roses."

"I hope so, dear. By the way, I've been wondering if young Glynn would care to join our party."

"I am quite sure he would not," quickly; "he is too busy."

"Don't you like him, Val? Do you know, I used to wish you might when I saw how devoted he was to you. I don't think my little girl would refuse an honest man's love because he chanced to be poor—money is not all."

Her head drooped low.

"It is not that, father. I had not meant to tell you, but perhaps it is my duty. Mr. Glynn asked me to marry him, and I refused. I could not think of him as he wished. You're not angry?"

"No, only most sorry; but you know, Val, I wish you in all things to consult your own happiness. You are young yet, and can afford to wait; only before I die I should like to see you safe in some good man's care."

"Don't talk of dying, father; you are a young man still, and I hope we shall spend many happy years together." With that she kissed him tenderly, and went away. But her heart cried out within her, "Noel! had you but been true, what happiness might have been ours! But now it never can be. Oh, my love! oh, my love! what is my life without you? Shall I ever be glad again, or has Heaven doomed me in my youth to a life of ceaseless pain?"

Jack Stannard was delighted to make one of the little party. He thought he saw a golden opportunity of winning Valerie's heart; he would have her so much to himself throughout the pleasant cruise, for the young officers were devoted to the sisters, and there was no one else to monopolise Miss Yorke.

Everything was *couleur de rose* to the young fellow when they started, but he soon discovered Valerie did not intend to give him too much of her time and attention.

She was yet smarting with the remembrance of that interview with Noel, and all her coquettishness were for the time laid aside.

She was kind and friendly to her ardent suitor, but he was quite experienced enough to know she loved him as little as any casual acquaintance.

He did not, however, despair, believing her to be heart-whole, and he fully intended to make the most of his opportunity; only Valerie gave him no chance.

She was constantly by her father's side. In after days she was glad and thankful to remember how lovingly she had ministered to him, how inseparable they had been.

The free life, the keen sea air, brought back light to her eyes, and colour to her cheeks. She could not be wholly sorrowful or depressed amongst this new and wonderful scenery; and then her companions were so kindly, so anxious to please, that she could only respond to their efforts.

At Lerwick, Jack got a letter from Noel, and, chancing upon Valerie alone, imparted its contents to her.

"My only excuse for boring you, Miss Yorke, is that Glynn and I have always been friends, and I want to make you like and respect him. I am glad to say he has now a case in hand, which, if he wins, it will make him famous. It's a murder case."

"I really would rather hear nothing about it, Mr. Stannard," said Valerie, with a little impatient gesture. "It is not in my nature to 'sup on horrors.' I never read any newspaper tragedy, on principle; if I did, my rest would be disturbed for nights. But I am glad to know your friend has a chance of distinction."

He looked at her half wistfully.

"I wished you liked him better. Why do you so persistently set your face against him?"

"You ask ridiculous questions," she said, petulantly; "and really I am not prepared to accept all your friends as mine!"

"I don't ask or expect so much; but if you only knew how many good turns Glynn has done me—"

"That would make no difference in my regard. Why should it?" she questioned, coldly; and then she moved away, and not for several days had he any other chance of speech with her.

But on a clear moonlight night his second chance came.

"Miss Yorke," he said, rebukefully, "why do you so rigidly avoid me?"

The hazel eyes met his calmly.

"I hope I have not been lacking in courtesy," she said. "I trusted that I had treated all my father's guests impartially."

"Why will you wilfully misunderstand me? And you must know I do not wish to stand on the same footing as the others. Won't you give me more of your society? I'll try my best not to bore you. I'll leave you in peace whenever you say 'Go.'"

Her slight disdainful gesture stayed the flow of his words. She was too miserable herself to be merciful, and his humility made her angry.

"For pity's sake, Mr. Stannard, do not adopt the rôle of tame cat. I hate meek men!"

He was roused to wrath at last, for she had tried him often.

"I suppose you prefer the brutality of the woman beater," he said, swiftly. "I cannot say I commend your taste; but, at least, it is

unique," and he was striding away when she laughed softly.

"You may come back," she said, archly. "I am mistaken; you are not by any means meek."

He was at her side in a moment.

"Why do you torture me so?" he asked reproachfully. "Why are you so often cruel?"

"Am I cruel?" she asked, looking up at him with wistful eyes. "I used not to be. At school they laughed at me for my tender-heartedness; but one changes as one grows old. Sometimes I scarcely understand that I am I. Oh! if ever I have hurt you by my pride and arrogance, I am sorry. Mr. Stannard, you must not mind me. I am only a wilful spoiled girl, whose words are little worth!"

In her settled mood she was so irresistible, so sweet, he longed to tell her all that was in his heart; only he had some measure of prudence, and did not intend losing her by a premature declaration. So as he took the little fingers offered so kindly, he said,—

"Let us make a bargain together, Miss Yorke: you on your part undertaking not to avoid me as if I had the plague; I promising to leave you as soon as symptoms of boredom appear in your face and manner. That is fair?"

"Quite, and I agree."

Then others joined them, and first one and then another begged Valerie to sing. Never so long as he lived would Jack Stannard forget that night.

The moonlight lay in level beams across the trackless water, making a silvery pathway. The waves made gentle music around and about the boat; but the sweetest music of all was Valerie's voice.

It was not powerful, it was not even highly trained, but it was tender and flexible and full of pathos.

She sang only old-world ballads, sitting with her hands loosely folded before her, and the moonlight full upon her downcast face.

They sat in silence whilst the singer gave them "The Banks of Allan Water," "The Bailiff's Daughter of Irlington," and a score of such simple ditties; and when she paused, one of them asked,—

"Just another song; and let it be 'Our hands have met.' You are not too tired, Miss Yorke?"

"No, I am not tired," she answered, and broke into the pathetic words and music so well known now; and when she came to the closing lines,—

Friends we still might seem to be,

If I my wrong could e'er forget;

Our hands have joined but not our hearts,

I would our hands had never met,—

her voice grew tremulous, and her's were not the only lashes upon which glittered bright tears.

She rose as the song ended, laughed a little uncertainly, then said,—

"I am very stupid, but music always affects me powerfully. I ought not to have given you anything so sad. What shall I do to atone?"

"Do nothing," said one young fellow, quickly. "I don't want to lose the flavour of that song;" and then they all laughed a little guiltily as though ashamed of any recent emotion, and separated for the night with cordial words.

The next day they came to Kirkwall, where they landed.

"I like this," said Valerie, as she walked beside Jack, "and what a heavenly day it is. Oh!" with a sudden cry of alarm, "what is the matter with father?" as Mr. Yorke, who was going before, stumbled and fell.

"Don't be alarmed," Jack said, reassuringly, "he has only tripped over a stone." But seeing Mr. Yorke did not rise, he ran towards him; only Valerie was faster of foot than he, and reached her father first. Mrs. Witham, white and trembling, was bending over him,

and a thin red stream was flowing from his head.

"He is stunned!" Valerie said, looking up at Jack. "You must get help!" She was very pale; but she did not lose her presence of mind, and, lifting her father's head, she strove to staunch the bleeding.

One of the party ran to the nearest house, another in quest of a doctor; but long before he arrived, Mr. Yorke had been conveyed to the house, and laid upon a bed.

"Concussion of the brain," said the medical man. "He must not be moved. Who will nurse him?"

"I," said Valerie, "he is my father, and Mrs. Witham will help!"

He gave one quick keen glance into the pale face, and seemed satisfied.

"You must remember to be very quiet. He may not know you for days; but it is essential your nerves should be well under control!"

"You may trust me," she answered, gently. "I know so well what is at stake. Now give me my instructions, please?"

There was something so resolute about the young face, so courageous in the mere pose of the little small form, that he had no fear of her failing, and proceeded to give her all necessary directions.

"I am afraid," he said, in conclusion, "you must remain here some weeks, even if the case progresses most favourably. I cannot sanction your father's removal for a long while yet. Is there anything I can do for you, Miss Yorke?"

"Nothing, thank you; but I am grateful for your kindness." And then when he had been gone some time, she went down to Jack.

"Mr. Stannard," she said, softly and gravely, "I am very sorry your pleasure has been brought to such an untimely end. My father is likely to be a prisoner for weeks, and, of course, I cannot expect or wish that our party should stay on here for our sake. I am sure it would grieve father to know that he had spoiled all the pleasure. I want you to tell the others so much, to beg them pardon me, that I have no time to spare for courtesies, and I hope you will all make the yacht your home for many happy days."

Jack stared at her in blank surprise; then he said, bluntly,—

"If you think I am going to leave you in the midst of your trouble, I may as well inform you at once, you are mistaken. My place is beside you, Valerie!"

"No," she said, with a sudden flash of colour, and a rather angry light in her eyes. "You will go with the others. I need no other support than Mrs. Witham, and I have no claim upon you!"

"Is that my fault?" he demanded; "don't you know that for months I have been trying to win a right to be near you in weal or woe, to share not your joys only, but your griefs? Valerie, won't you let me stay on and try to win your affection?"

She looked at him with inexpressible sadness in her eyes.

"I wish you had not spoken, and yet, perhaps, it is best, because now I may show you how vain are any hopes you have been entertaining. Mr. Stannard, I like you very much; but I shall never do more, and I will wrong no man by giving him my hand without my heart. I don't know why you love me," almost piteously, "I don't think I have ever been very kind to you, and I am not pretty or good!"

"You are Valerie!" he broke in, "I want nothing more. Ah! listen to me, do not send me away hopeless; only try me. I have loved you so long!"

"Hush," she said, and her face looked drawn and wan, "you must not speak to me of love again. A long while ago, years it seems to me, as measured by my pain and shame, I loved some one who seemed to hold me dear. We spent five happy weeks in daily communion, and then he went away, telling me at the very last that ours had been only an idle flirtation. Hearts don't easily break,

or mine would have broken them. I don't know what I said and did then; but I hugged my secret close, and to you only have I confessed my folly and my misery. Don't you see how impossible it is I should ever love again? Oh, forgive me that I hurt you, and forget me!"

The young fellow took her hands in his. He was very white and trembled exceedingly.

"And for a second's sake you renounce all hope of joy, and refuse to hear an honest man!"

"You must not be harsh with him," she answered, "he did not mean to hurt me, and sometimes I think he was the victim of an untoward fate. Now let me go, I have been too long away from my father's room!"

"A moment yet, Valerie; won't you give me any hope? Won't you try to forget this fellow and let me make you happy?"

"If I tried until the day of my death," she answered, solemnly, "I should not succeed. 'Love is love for evermore,' and I am not given to change. Forgive me, and forget me."

"You have no need to ask forgiveness, and I never can forget you! Valerie, will you kiss me good-bye?"

She shrank back, remembering the kiss she had given Noel.

"You ask too much," she said, under her breath. "I—I cannot do it—but, oh! may Heaven bless you and make you happy!" She held out her hand to him then. There were tears in her beautiful eyes. He stooped and kissed the soft small fingers; loving her more than he had ever done; he murmured broken words of love and farewell, and so he left her.

The next day the *Sea Maiden* left Kirkwall, and Mrs. Witham and Valerie remained behind to minister to the sick man's wants; one of them to watch with anguish every thrope of pain he suffered, and to pray in her heavy heart that Heaven would be merciful to her and to him. So the "sad sum of way-worn days" was told.

CHAPTER V.

"For there, in a ghastly pit, long since a body was found,
His who had given me life—Oh, father! Oh, God, was it well?"

Tennyson.

Dax followed day, one heavy week succeeded another before Mr. Yorke was able to leave his bed; many a time they thought that he must die, and only the most unremitting care preserved his life. Valerie, the very ghost of her old self, watched over him as a mother watches a sick child, and his first conscious words were addressed to her; hers was the face upon which his weary eyes opened.

"Can nothing be done to rouse him?" asked the doctor. "If only he could shake off this depression, I believe he would rapidly recover. Is there anything to trouble him?"

"Nothing! nothing!" answered Valerie; but every day her heart grew more heavy within her, for, mentally, Mr. Yorke grew worse instead of better. It was not until October they were able to move him, and then they returned to the old house at Canterbury—but not the old life. Valerie's voice never now rang gaily through the rooms; she spoke and moved quietly, and in her eyes there was a look akin to fear.

On all possible occasions she was with her father, for the melancholy induced by his illness was assuming a cruel form; but, as yet, no one dared hint to the loving daughter that his brain was gradually softening, and shortly he must be as a little child in her care. He spoke sometimes of her mother, in a mild voice, and sometimes the tears would course down his poor furrowed cheeks at the thought of their brief married life—so happy! so happy! and, alas! so long gone by! But this was not often—generally he spoke of the past

with a resignation touching to see. And so the winter wore away, and spring once more made lovely the whole earth. It was then he grew so helpless and so obviously a mental wreck, that Valerie with tears sought out their old doctor.

"My dear young lady," he said, pitifully, "there is no hope of his recovery. He is not dangerous, I think he never will be; but it would be well if you provided some efficient keeper."

Her lips quivered.

"I cannot yield my office to any."

"But you cannot always keep watch, Miss Yorke; he needs you most in the day—let me send you help."

"If it must be," she hesitated—then, "you know best doctor! Oh, my father! oh, my beloved father!" but when he sought to comfort her, she turned aside, and in a moment had recovered her composure.

"Do not speak kindly to me," she said. "I could not bear it now. I must harden my heart, or I shall break down and hurt him!"

The doctor went his way full of sorrow for this solitary young thing whose wealth had so signally failed to bring her happiness; and Valerie slowly climbed to her father's room. He looked up quickly as she entered, and a feeble smile played about his mouth, lit up the faded half-vacant eyes.

"It is you, Edith," he said, Edith had been his wife's name. How long you have been away, and oh, how I have missed you!"

His unhappy daughter went to his side.

"It is I, father, your own Valerie; do you not know me? Oh, my dear! oh, my dear! call me again by my name—only let me feel you know me—I ask no more!" and then she burst into heavy sobs.

He looked at her a moment, frowningly.

"Edith had always a smile for me," he said, "she did not weary me with tears;" and he thrust the slim young figure aside.

She fell on her knees before him. "Father!" and in that one word she caught up and uttered an infinity of woe—"Father, look at me again. I am your child—little Val."

"I want my wife," he muttered. "I want my wife."

The girl fell back from him, sobbing wildly, whilst over and over again he muttered his complaint, and did not seem so much as to see that drooping childish form.

But Valerie was never weak long. Presently she rose, and with her arms about his neck, half sobbed, half said,—

"Dear, try to remember. You cannot quite have forgotten me, your own little girl—the little Val you loved and were so proud of. Oh, my dear! oh, my dear! not that."

He frowned at her, and with restless fingers once more set her aside.

"I do not know you. Go away! go away!" It seemed to her then her heart would break. He had loved her so fondly, he had thought nothing too costly for his darling—and now he loathed her!

She fled from the room, and out there in the long, dark corridor she flung her arms above her head, and whilst all her face was distorted and made awful by an anguish, she cried aloud,—

"Oh, Heaven help me! Surely death is mild to this!"

On the morrow a keeper came—by name Kelpin—and Mrs. Witham hoped that some rest might be won by her darling. But night and day the accumulated sorrows of her life weighed upon her, her waking moments were full of anxiety, her sleep haunted by evil dreams, until she came to be but the mere shadow of herself.

It was towards the close of May that Jack Stannard wrote her, of Noel she had heard nothing. He was quite unaware of the terrible calamity which had befallen her father, and so his letter ran thus,—

"MY DEAR VALERIE,—

"Despite your prohibition you see I am writing you, and I cannot help myself. Long

ago, at Kirkwall, you gave me my answer to a certain prayer, and bade me hope for nothing. Only a man who has grown desperate will risk his all on one throw. Sweet-heart, cannot you think kindly of me? Won't you try to love me? There is no one who needs you so badly as I; no one who would cherish you so fondly. I am not so stupid as to forget the ties which bind you to your father; but he can never have half the need of you that I have. If you can write me some message of hope, address me at the Claudian. If you steal your heart against me, write nothing. I shall wait until Wednesday for a reply. If I do not receive one, I shall leave here with a party of friends for Africa. Be merciful; but, however you decide, remember I am always your loyal

"JACK STANNARD."

Valerie did not reply.

In her sorrow and desolation she longed for some word from Noel, but not for worlds would she have recalled herself to his memory. Perhaps now he had forgotten her, and oh! it could not be true that he had ever loved her. How happy she would have been could she only believe that he honestly held her dear.

She called in great physicians to her father. "No hope," they said, and their words went to her heart like cruel knives. But one advised that Mr. Yorke should be conveyed to some remote Devonshire village.

"Physically it may help him," he said, "but not mentally. Still, the change would be good for you both."

Her father caught at the word "Devonshire," and a gleam of memory came to him. His young wife had died and been buried there; so he murmured over and over again,—

"We will go to Littlevale. It was there I said good-bye to Edith. Ah! yes, we will go to Littlevale," and thither they turned their faces.

They secured comfortable lodgings, and for a day or two Mr. Yorke seemed brighter and happier, so that the young heart of his daughter had new joy, new hope.

He liked best to wander to the primitive cemetery where she lay. Soon he began to haunt the spot, and whatever he forgot in his unhappy condition, he never forgot Edith or failed to recognise her grass-grown grave.

Kelpin, his keeper, sometimes accompanied him, but more often his daughter was his companion; and how cruelly it hurt her to find he regarded her with coldness and suspicion, none can tell. Kelpin had a little ante-room just outside the millionaire's bed-chamber, and Valerie had made it very pleasant for him.

"Be faithful in discharge of your duty," she said, "and you will not find me ungenerous."

Kelpin was a rather conscientious person, and honestly did his duty, not thinking of reward, until the unlucky night he was invited to a party at a neighbouring house.

Valerie, always kind and considerate to inferiors, granted permission for him to attend at once, and herself ministered to her father's needs.

He seemed unusually quiet and cheerful, and as she bent once to kiss him he put a fond hand about her.

"My dear, my dear!" he said.

Her heart leapt within her, and the tears rose to her eyes.

"Father, you know me?"

"Yes, you are Val—little Val. Heaven bless you, dear! Heaven bless you!" and then he fell asleep and she sat watching by him with thankful heart. For surely he was better—had he not recognised her?

It was nearly midnight when Kelpin returned. To Val's inexperienced eyes the man was perfectly sober. He walked with his usual dignity, and the glassy stare of his eyes escaped her.

"I will go to my room now," she said in a whisper, fearful lest she should disturb her father. "Mr. Yorke is undoubtedly better;

but you will be careful in your watch, and call me if there is the slightest change."

She had been asleep but a little while, when a strange and fearful dream came to her. She thought she stood by the edge of a deep ravine, and, looking down, she saw the inert figure of a man. In shuddering horror she looked again, but his face she could not see, and then, in an agony of fear, she descended the loathsome depths; by sheer force, turned that dead face towards her, and, lo! it was her father's.

She shrieked aloud; she woke and rose hurriedly from her bed, and thrusting her feet into slippers, hastily robing herself in a dainty dressing gown, she ran to Kelpin's room. He was asleep in a chair. She shook him fiercely.

"My father," she gasped, "where is he? The door is opened. Oh! Great Heaven! his room is empty. Wake! wake! help me to find him!"

The piercing notes of her voice reached Mrs. Witham, and she came hurrying to the spot.

"Valerie! child!" she cried, "oh, what has happened?" and she turned for explanation to the stolid half-drunken keeper; only Val was quicker to reply than he.

"My father has gone," she said, recovering her self-composure; "we must find him! There is only one place which could tempt him to wander, and that is the cemetery. We shall find him by my mother's grave. Come with me."

Kelpin, half sobered by this disaster, brought a lantern, and they went out together, having first roused the household.

It was a long walk to the village churchyard—a mile or more—and, although it was May, the nights were very cold, so that Val, in her flimsy dressing gown and unstockinged feet, was chilled to the bone; but she did not think of these things now. All personal discomfort was forgotten in her dread lest her father had harmed himself.

Straight to the burial-ground she went, and on to her mother's grave. What was that lying so awfully still across the narrow mound?

She caught her breath with a sobbing sound, and those nearest her thought that she would fall; but gathering all her strength with one mighty effort, she reached the grave, and stooping, lifted her father's head upon her knee. Something warm flowed over her hands. She shrieked,—

"The light, one of you, quick!"

Kelpin, with a sick feeling, turned the lantern full upon the prostrate form.

"Heavens!" he said, in horror, "he has cut his throat!"

"A doctor!" Valerie gasped, "a doctor! He is not dead!"

And then the landlord touched her gently, pitifully.

"Come away, my dear young lady; you can do no good."

She grasped his meaning, and her hands relaxed their hold. To and fro she swayed a moment, and then she fell unconscious beside that dear dead.

She knew nothing of the homeward journey, being wrapped in blessed insensibility. And, notwithstanding her horror and the confusion of the time, Mrs. Witham was careful to destroy the blood-stained dressing-gown.

"When she recovers, let nothing around her remind her of this awful calamity," she said. There were tears in her eyes, and her lips quivered as she turned to the remorseful Kelpin. "I am quite sure no one depletes your neglect more than you yourself, and so I will say nothing to add to your grief. But as soon as possible I wish you to leave. Miss Yorke will not like to see you again. What is due to you in the way of salary?"

He told her, and settling his claim, she said,—

"You must wait for the inquest; after that consider yourself free."

Throughout the next day Valerie lay in a

state of unconsciousness, and so was spared much that would have been cruel to bear.

It was not until "with slow, mock-solemn tread" the undertakers' assistants brought up the coffin, that she came out of her trance to find Mrs. Witham seated beside her.

Clutching at her with tremulous hands, she questioned,—

"What is that sound?" and when her friend had told her, said, under her breath, "They will not refuse him Christian burial? That would kill me."

"My dear, no; he will lie with your mother. All necessary arrangements are complete."

Valerie lay silent then, her face turned to the wall; but later, when Mrs. Witham had left her, she rose from her bed and went to that silent room.

There was nothing terrible about her darling now; all signs of his tragic end had been removed or concealed. She turned back the sheet, and kissed the clay-cold lips, which never in her young life had given her a harsh word, and then she fell to weeping as though her heart must break.

Ill as she was, she refused to absent herself from the funeral.

"Let me be with him to the last," she said, and who could deny her prayer? And when all was over, she pleaded with Mrs. Witham.

"Let us go away—to Ingatedell," for now her heart went yearningly towards the place where Noel and she had first met; she saw again the slow, winding river with the rushes, its waxen lilies with their great flat leaves. Being anxious in all things to please her, Mrs. Witham raised no objection.

How the rumours came about no one knew, but the papers were full of Mr. Yorke's suicide, which, so ran the rumour, was on account of the loss of his fortune; and the ex heiress had gone into retirement.

"Let it pass," said Valerie, with a faint smile, "the truth will soon be known; it does not suit me at present to deny it. And her faithful companion regarded her with wonder, not guessing it was in her heart to prove Noel.

CHAPTER VI.

"Might I not tell,

Of difference, reconciliation, pledges given,
And vows, where were never need of vows,
And kisses, where the heart on one wild leap,
Hung tranced from all pulsation?"

Tennyson.

THEY went to Ingatedell, securing the cottage they had before rented; and Valerie waited, with a patience born perhaps of despair, for the lover who was so long in coming. May had passed, June came—not the month of roses it is supposed to be, but cold, wet, depressing, with hardly any blossoms in the hedgerows or by the streams. Mrs. Witham was heartily weary of Ingatedell, but she was too unselfish to speak of her own feelings, and Valerie seemed to take a melancholy pleasure in wandering in the old ways—a pleasure for which the gentle lady could not account, knowing nothing of what had gone before. With the close of June there came no improvement in the weather, rather it grew worse, and folks who understand such things spoke dolefully of ruined crops, disease and famine, and prayed, as the clergy forgot to do, for fine weather.

Valerie heard much of these topics; they drew her thoughts from herself, and it pleased her to make herself acquainted with the poor around, and the needs of their lives. The slender black-robed figure was soon familiar in every cottage, and a welcome sight; for Valerie did not affect the airs of a fine lady, or the insolence of the average district visitor. Neither did she impede the housewife's work by a morning call; she waited for the work to be over, the husband's dinner served, and she was not the least welcome because she considered these small details.

And now, when all London was gay, she

lived out her placid life; if she remembered the festivities of the previous year, she never spoke of them; if she felt Ingatedell dull, she bore its dullness apathetically, uncomplainingly. London is bad enough in wet weather, but surely it cannot compare with a country place, when traffic is stopped for the time, when the houses are kept religiously closed, and folks make only the necessary excursions to the "one shop" the village boasts. A white mist envelopes the river, and hangs like a mournful fringe about the hills, and everything is as damp and melancholy as the most confirmed misanthrope could wish. And then the evening—oh! the dreadful evenings—no society, no books, no fun, and no lights!

Mrs. Witham found this state of things very unpleasant; she had always lived in towns, until she took charge of the little Valerie, and the melancholy silence of the country oppressed her. One day she ventured to remark,—

"If the weather does not improve don't you think it would be more cheerful for us at Canterbury? Shall we go home?"

Valerie answered by a quick negative gesture.

"Not there!" she said, when she was quite sure of her self-control. "Not there! I should go mad, looking for him in every room, and missing his presence always. It is not often, with a little sob, that I speak of him, but you know I do not forget; only—I must not break down—no tears, and no prayers, will ever bring him back again. Let me stay here, until the first water lilies open. I used to hate them once, but not now—I feel as if their blooming will bring me some consolation. You do not mind?"

"I will do anything you wish; I only want to see you happy."

Valerie sighed.

"Sometimes I think I was born to misery!" she said, wearily, "I certainly have had no happiness of late."

"Dear, if I could only see you safe in some good man's care I would be content. Tell me, Valerie, is there some one you love of whose disinterested love you are not quite sure, that you allow the world at large to believe you all but a pauper—is it for his coming you are waiting?"

The blood flamed high in the pale young face.

"How did you guess the truth?" she whispered.

"I can hardly tell, but lately that thought has dwelt with me persistently. Valerie, darling, do I know him?"

"Yes."

"Is it Mr. Stannard? I have often wished it might be so."

"It is not Mr. Stannard; and now you must ask me no more questions. I shall be ashamed, as it is, to know my secret is my own no longer. This one thing I will tell you: I was afraid that he would marry me for my fortune alone, and so I sent him away. Now is his chance to prove himself loyal;" and with that she turned away, nor would she in the days that followed ever refer to that subject.

One night in the middle of July, Noel Glynn sat smoking on the balcony of an Italian hotel. He looked worn and ill, in fact he had been ordered abroad by his medical man, his health having failed because of the pressure of work he had accepted.

He was thinking moodily of the past, wondering if Valerie had found consolation in some other man's love—if ever this cruel ache in his heart would grow less—when he heard his name spoken in a familiar voice, and, turning, saw one of his Temple associates beside him.

"You are welcome, Roxdale," he said, cordially. "I am tolerably sick of my own society. But what brings you here?"

"My estimable aunt, old boy. She wrote me she was bringing the girls to town, and, by experience, I knew what deadly peril I

should be in. One or another of my cousins would have captured me if I stayed—their mamma regards me as legitimate prey—and so I ignominiously fled—see? Now let me tell you the latest news from England, or do you see the papers?"

"Haven't looked at one for weeks."
"Oh, then I needn't fear to be rebuked with 'chestnuts.' Well, first of all, old Sowerby has married little Mrs. Pratt, and already they fight like—ahem!—niggers. Pretty Jessie Wing has eloped with Fuller, the heavy dragon we used to meet at her mother's. And—oh! I say, old Yorke's dead!"

"Yorke dead! When? Good Heavens, Boxdale! It can't be true!"

"But it is; he committed suicide. Lost his money somehow. These big contractors generally make fools of themselves at last. Let's his daughter unprovided for—denied hard on her; always accustomed to luxury, you know. And she isn't even engaged, so there's not much chance of her making a good match now. Great Heavens, man! how shocked you look!"

"I am shocked beyond measure," answered Noel, speaking with difficulty. "I am thinking of that poor girl!"

"Yes, it is rough on her; but I suppose she will get on all right. Friends will help her into a decent crib as governess or companion. She's at Ingatedell just now, with Mrs. Witham; living's cheap there, and I guess she's waiting for something to turn up. She must have been a fool to send Stannard to the right-about." And so he chatted on, wondering at Glyn's dulness, and finally retreating to the billiard-room to find amusement there.

When he inquired for Noel in the morning, he was literally astounded to find he had left.

"He never said a word to me about going last night," he muttered. "I call it shabby treatment; I didn't think he could be capable of it."

"O, gift of God! Oh perfect day!
Whereon shall no man work or play!
Almost it is enough for me
Not to be doing, but to be!"

So quoted Valerie as she turned from a window towards Mrs. Witham.

"It is the first fine day in a fortnight! Are you not coming out with me?"

"Not this morning, dear; my head aches so badly, I think I will lie down. No—to be rude—I don't want your company. I would infinitely prefer to be alone."

So Valerie went by herself, choosing the old familiar path she had trodden so often with Noel. How long ago it seemed now, as measured by the anguish crowded into these two years of her life.

It was a glorious morning, and well might the heart rejoice in the loveliness around, but Valerie's was like lead within her breast.

Now and again she paused, sometimes by a gate, sometimes beneath the wide-spreading branches of overhanging trees, and then she would murmur to herself,—

"Here it was I first dared dream that he loved me," or "Here he first kissed me. Noel! Noel! Oh, how I thought to make his life glad. What prayers I prayed for him! how humble and how grateful I was that he cared for me!" Then suddenly she flung out her hands with a wild gesture of despair. "He never loved me! he never loved me! I was as a toy to him! I, who had given him my heart and my life! I, who worshipped him, who counted my wealth as nothing compared with his love! Noel! Noel! if only you could guess the anguish you have made me endure, even you would feel some pity for my pain!"

And now she reached the spot where the water lilies grew. Two waxen blossoms had opened to the sun, and as her eyes dwelt upon their pure perfection, the tears came, and her lips quivered.

"It was here we said good-bye," she mur-

mured. "It was here you taught me that stern truth, which all but broke my heart. Oh, love! my love! you had better far have killed me!"

She sank down then upon the giant roots of an old elm, and covering her face with her hands, wept quietly and hopelessly.

"All gone!" she said. "They are all gone! In the world I stand alone—father, mother, lover all torn from me! How shall I endure my desolation and live!"

And then she heard the rustling of feet amongst the long lush grass close by, and, dashing aside her tears, looked anywhere but in the direction of the new comer.

But a voice spoke her name, a voice that sent the blood madly through her veins,—

"Valerie! my little Val!" it said, and then some one had reached her side, and, dropping on his knees, took and held fast her hands in his own. "I did not know," he said, uncertainly, "I never heard a word of this until two days ago. I came as fast as I could to assure you of my sympathy and my love. I know how hard it must be for you to listen, but let me alone if I can. A man may sin and repent. Valerie! love of my heart! only look at me. Let me read your answer in your eyes." But as yet she could not obey him: movement and speech alike had failed her.

"Sweet and dear," he pleaded, stricken to the heart by her silence, not comprehending yet that joy had made her dumb. "Sweet and dear, it was here I sinned against you; here let me make atonement. You loved me once, you told me that; you said you never would cease to pray for me. Do you remember? Ah! how those words have comforted me through all the dreary past; but you could not trust me! I did not deserve you should. Only now, when you are forsaken by your friends, and robbed of your wealth, perhaps you will believe that no other woman can be what you are, and will ever be to me!"

"You have heard of my poverty?" she contrived to say.

"Yes, I have heard, and I have come to ask you to be my wife. I haven't much to offer you. I am only a poor man yet, but I will work for you, live for you. Oh! Valerie, forgive and forget all the cruel words I spoke to you once—here on this very spot. Remember only that I am he who loves you, and that all my hope, all my aim is to shield you from further trouble!"

She looked at him then. She saw the love in his dark eyes. Ah! never any more could she doubt him. She suffered him to draw her into his close embrace, and, as her head drooped upon his shoulder, murmured,—

"I was praying for your coming even as I heard your step! Oh! Noel, my Noel now, how I love you! how I love you! It frightens me to feel all that you are to me if I should lose you!"

"You can only lose me by death. Kiss me, my wife!"

Once before he had pleaded, and she had given the caress he begged. She remembered that now, as she raised her lips to his.

"I kiss you in token of forgiveness and submission," she said, with a shy smile; "forgiveness and forgetfulness of the past, submission in the future. Oh, my dear! Oh, my dear! how bright I will strive to make your life."

"You will succeed. I want only you."

"Noel! we will not begin our new life with deceit. I—I want to 'fess,' as Topsy says. I would like you to know it now. I am not the poor girl you imagine. You may contradict that rumour as soon as you like. Oh! I am glad! I am glad to think my fortune will help you to fame. I only wanted to try you. Forgive me, and do not love me less! Hush, not a word. Riches are not to be despised!" and then he stopped her breath with his kisses.

A little later she said,—

"This afternoon we will come back for those lilies. I hate them no longer; rather I

shall love them so long as I live. Oh, this happy day! this happy day!"

And then they sat and talked as lovers will, idle, foolish, blissful talk, whilst the gleaming river ran on, and the sun rose higher in the heavens, the blue heavens, where never a flock or cloud marred the great serene vault.

Later still they went to Mrs. Witham, and then she understood the truth.

"This is he," she said, giving a hand to each. "Dear, it was what your father wished," and first she kissed the girl and then her lover, saying as she did so, "I am an old woman, you will not be angry."

All the world stood amazed when it was known little Valerie Yorke was a wealthy woman, and those who for awhile had forgotten her existence suddenly discovered in her their dearest friend; but little thought she had of them, little she cared about their faith or unfaith, being secure in Noel's love.

They were not to be married for six months owing to Valerie's recent bereavement; but she had decided to sell the old house at Canterbury. It had only sad associations for her, and she had suffered long and sorely enough.

A week before their marriage a letter reached Noel from Jack Stannard, in which the writer said,—

"If you ever see Miss Yorke, tell her I am quite happy, she will be glad to hear that; and, old boy, I am going to be married. Come over and see us. You've no idea what this place is. It makes even me postical. It is a land of beauty and delight. This verse quoted yesterday by Nellie, I think she said it was Tennyson's, expresses my enthusiasm exactly,—

'Larger constellations burning, mellow moons and happy skies,
Breadths of tropic shade and palms in cluster,
knots of Paradise.'

It is needless to say Noel did not respond to that invite. He and Valerie were quietly married, Mrs. Witham taking up her residence with them to be loved more, and more honoured as the years went by.

And every July, fair or foul, husband and wife would travel to Ingatedell, where first they met and loved; and once, with her arm about his neck, Valerie entreated,—

"When I die—if I die first, and Heaven grant I may, for your loss I could not bear—bury me here, as near to the river as you may. I would like to sleep where the water lilies grow."

"Do not speak of death, sweet wife. Let us rather live within sight of the river, within reach of the lilies."

[THE END.]

FIFTY English sparrows were taken to Australia in 1860, and now there are countless millions of them in all the colonies; they refuse to eat insects like their ancestors, but devote themselves to fruit, grain, peas, and other vegetable things, to the ruin of hundreds of farmers and gardeners.

A GERMAN specialist, Dr. Cold, has recently pleaded for giving young people more sleep. A healthy infant sleeps most of the time during the first weeks; and in the early years people are disposed to let children sleep as much as they will. But from six to seven, when school begins, there is a complete change. At the age of ten or eleven the child sleeps only eight or nine hours, when he needs at least ten or eleven, and as he grows older the time of rest is shortened. Dr. Cold believes that up to twenty a youth needs nine hours' sleep, and an adult should have eight or nine. With insufficient sleep the nervous system, and brain especially not resting enough, and ceasing to work normally, we find exhaustion, excitability, and intellectual disorders gradually taking the place of love of work, general well-being, and the spirit of initiative.

FACETIE.

THE only time we desire short weights—between the acts.

A OUN is like a mule: when it is overloaded it kicks.

MONEY which is "coming to you" does not always arrive.

EVERY one's sweetheart sometimes gets up in arms against him.

A MAN on a farm doesn't mingle in promiscuous society; she has her own exclusive set.

CORN is well provided with ears, but it's talk doesn't amount to much, it's too husky.

IF you want your boy to love you, don't make him see potatoes in the backyard while a brass band is passing the house.

SEN: "I suppose in Bohemia every one is Tom, Dick, and Harry?" He: "Well, yes, but Bills are rather more numerous."

SOMEBODY asks why ships are invariably spoken of in the female gender. But is this the case? What about mail steamers.

AN actor who marries a leading woman can blame no one but himself if he is led for the rest of his life.

ADAM was the first odd fellow, but when he took Eve into partnership, he ceased to be of the independent order.

WITH some people it is not their own troubles as much as the happiness of their neighbours that disturbs them.

"MY son, define 'ambition.'" "Well, it's always feeling that you want to do something that you know you can't."

"THE shades of night are falling fast," sang Mr. Mites as he went to pull down the blind and jerked it off the roller.

HE: "What a beautiful figure Miss Sweetly has!" She: "Yes; the dressmaker says it is so easy to build upon—so angular, you know!"

A YOUNG man was asked why he did not dance the round dances. He replied: "I prefer to do my hugging on the sofa; it is not so tiresome."

A PAPER devoted to the best interests of single blessedness suggests a tax on beauty. There is scarcely a woman who would not demand to pay the tax.

MARIE: "Why is Mr. Puffer in such a hurry to marry Maud?" Arthur: "He promised her that he wouldn't smoke a cigar while they were engaged."

CHANGE of ownership: "Are you the owner of this house, Jones?" "I was before the baby was born. I am under the impression the nurse owns it now."

FIGGS: "You have an independent income, haven't you?" Diggs: "Independent? Well, I should say I had. It has utterly ignored me for years."

GIVE a young man plenty of money, wine and fast horses, and Satan has no anxiety about that man; he comes to watch him, and only gives directions for his reception.

THERE are women who sometimes think on Sunday that they have religion, but when the clothes line breaks down on Monday they find out that they haven't.

"WHERE are you going, my pretty maid?" "Going to cooking school, sir," she said. "Can I go with you, my pretty maid?" "We don't cook veal to-day," she said.

A RECENT advertisement reads: "Wanted, a man and his wife as caretakers for a gentleman's country house. One must be sober." Was it too much to expect both to be?

"So you passed yourself as a widow while you were away, eh?" said Mr. Briggs to his spouse, who, by the way, is rather good-looking. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, but I suppose you are not." "Of course I am not," was her reply. "I did so merely on Johnny's account. You have no idea how kind all the gentlemen were to him."

NOTHING but perpetual going to sea in every variety of craft will effectually get rid of seasickness, unless one is disposed to try that finest of all remedies—stopping ashore.

YOUNG MOTHER: "Wake up! Quick! Quick! You must run for the doctor." Young father: "Eh? What's the matter?" Young Mother: "Baby has stopped smiling in her sleep."

"THAT was a very reasonable request the Rev. Mr. Whittle made last Sunday." "What was it?" "He requested that no buttons be contributed for the heathen without garments attached to them."

MR. JAGGS: "I tell you, whisky is a handy thing to have around when you have cramps." Mrs. Jaggs (who knows a thing or two): "Yes, and cramps are a handy thing to have around when you have whisky in the house."

"BROWNIE has cured his wife of everlasting talking." "How, for goodness sake?" "He told her that she looked prettier with her mouth closed, and now she can hardly be induced to utter a syllable."

ANOTHER FORK: "That goes without saying," said Miss Blosser, in the course of a conversation. "Yes," replied Miss Backbay, of Boston; "it perambulates without articulation."

"AM I as dear to you as ever, George?" asked the wife, carelessly. "My love," answered George, candidly, "since you took to tailor-made clothes, you grow dearer and dearer every day."

JUDGE (to prisoner after conviction): "Anything to say, Sneaky?" "Yes, my lord, I 'ave to say as I am the victim of my physician's advice. He says, says he, 'you wants change,' and I took it."

ITEM from a San Francisco paper: "Mr. Jones felodensed this morning successfully. He hymenated three years ago, and he will be sepulchred to-morrow." Who says that they cannot write English out on the Pacific coast?

SALVATION ARMY CAPTAIN: "I hope you will be fired with zeal in our cause." Recruit: "I dunno 'actly wot dat is, but if it's anything like bein' 'fired' down the front steps, like I was last night, I don't believe I'm goin' to like it much."

PHILANTHROPIST: "How can you bear to thus evade your duty to yourself and society? No man, however humble, but can find in himself some natural gift, to cultivate which is a profit as well as a pleasure." Weary Watkins: "Partner, I discovered long ago that I had a natural gift for restin'."

"PENELOPE," said her brother, "don't look angry, now. But, really, didn't Will kiss you when he left last night?" "How can you use such pious-babelian phraseology, George?" she answered, haughtily. "There was a slight labial juxtaposition, but it was only momentary, and hence not innocuous."

A MEMBER of one of the rhetorical classes in a certain college had just finished his declamation, when one of the class said, "Mr. —, do you suppose that a general would address his soldiers in the manner in which you spoke that piece?" "Yes, sir, I do," was the reply, "if he was half soared to death."

COOLIDGE (telling the story): "You see, it was a narrow road, and the horse was a spirited animal. As the bicycle approached I saw Jones was the rider. I called to him as I reined up, and the horse, quivering between the shafts, suddenly—" Carious: "The horse took fright and upset the wagon?"

"No; the bicycle must have taken fright, for it upset Jones."

MISS LAYMLOW: "Really, Mr. Squirmley, I do not think that you had better take me out. You don't know what a perfect Jonah I am, and always will be." Mr. Squirmley (seizing a long-waited chance): "Oh, Miss Laym—Clara—let me be the whale!" Miss Laym—low: "This is very sudden, Mr. Squirmley. But I have no desire for a three days' engagement."

VISITOR (in Jones's room at 11 p.m.): "That young lady in the house across the way sings like a bird." Jones (unkindly): "Well, not altogether. You see a bird stops singing at night."

IT is nearly safe to say that the most disappointed man in this wide, wide world is the man who expects to get a letter by a particular post from his sweetheart, and receives instead a bill from his tailor.

"DIDN'T the poet from whom you were reading refer in one of his lines to the germ of immortality?" inquired Mrs. B. of her husband. "Yes; but that strikes me as carrying the microbe theory too far."

YOUNG HOUSEWIFE: "I think we'll have some sels for the first course, cook." Cook: "How much shall I get, mum?" Young Housewife: "Oh, about three yards will do, I should think."

"JOHNNY CUNEO, if your father can do a piece of work in seven days, and your Uncle George can do it in nine days, how long would it take both of them?" "They'd never get it done. They'd sit around and swap fish stories."

MRS. NEWBICH: "Oh, yes, Mr. Harrison, we're building an elegant new house; and its finest feature will be a spiral staircase." [Mr. Harrison repeats to Mr. Roberts.] Mr. Roberts: "That's all right. She referred to her back stairs."

"IT is law you're talking about? Look now, when I was a sander I shot twenty men for the Queen, and she gave me a pinahun; but if I was only to shoot one stray fellow for divar-sion, bedad, I'd be tried for murder. There's law for yer."

"WILL you give me the next waltz, Miss Long?" "I wonder how you can ask it. Didn't you make some jocular remark this evening about my being so tall?" "I only alluded to you as 'sweetness long drawn out.'" "You may have the next waltz."

THE conversation turned upon a certain gentleman who is not what you may call a brilliant speaker. "He has only three faults," a friend apologetically remarked:—(1) He reads his speeches; (2) he reads them badly; (3) they are not worth reading."

CUSTOMER: "Hi, waiter. How much longer am I to wait for that steak, eh?" Waiter: "Are you in a particular hurry, sir?" Customer: "Certainly. I leave to-morrow for the Continent, and I should like that steak before I go."

"DOCTOR, how am I coming on? Do you think there is any hope?" said a very sick man to Dr. Blieter. "Your chances are the best in the world. The statistics show that one person in ten recovers," replied the doctor. "Then there is not much hope for me?"

"Oh, yes there is. You are the tenth case that I have treated, and the other nine are dead. I don't see how you can help getting well if the statistics are to be relied on."

RUSSIAN OFFICER (politely): "Pardon me, I know you are a stranger, but it will save me much trouble and questioning if you will kindly raise your hat as the others do. Here comes the Czar." American (defiantly): "I raise my hat to no potentate on earth. I am an American—freeman, sir, born within the shadow of—" Russian Officer (struck with a bright idea): "The Czar is very rich."

American (humbly raising his hat): "Why didn't you say so before?"

"YOU will have to give me another room, I am afraid," said the traveller to the hotel-clerk. "What's the matter, sir? Aren't you comfortable where you are?" "Well, not exactly. That German musician in the next room and I don't get on well. Last night he tooted away on his clarinet so that I thought I never should get to sleep. After I had caught a few winks I was awakened by a pounding at my door. 'What's the matter?' I asked. 'Of you please,' said the German, 'dot you would schnerre of der same key. You vas go from B flat to G, and it sobpoils der music!'"

SOCIETY.

FACIAL paralysis can generally be traced to using hair dye.

In some parts of Berlin there are special public houses for women.

WOOLLEN GOWNS are brightened by yeast and yoke and sleeves of brocade, bengaline or faille.

It is satisfactory to know upon excellent authority that "Carmen Sylva's" illness is nothing more serious than an acute attack of "nerves."

THE Russian photographers have a peculiar way of punishing customers who do not pay their bills. They hang out the pictures of such customers upside down.

THE melancholy death of the Grand Duchess Paul has placed the family of the Prince of Wales in mourning, as she was a niece of the Princess, and also her god-daughter.

DOM PEDRO, ex Emperor of Brazil is, it is understood, expected in England shortly to make a short stay at Bushey, which has been placed at his disposal by the Duc de Nemours.

A *PARIER MACHE* trunk is one of the latest ideas. It brings despite to the baggage-smasher, who finds it practically indestructible.

It is said that the Queen contemplates having more than one miniature crown made shortly, in order to utilize in a fitting manner the superb rubies of which Her Majesty is the fortunate possessor.

THE Duke of Sutherland has been seriously ill at Donrobin; though he is now reported to be somewhat better. He is thought to have strained his heart while deerstalking, and Dr. Muirhead was called in from Edinburgh to attend him. The Duke is now out of danger, though still far from well.

THERE are a good many English as well as French women in the Turkish harems, and they are by no means compelled to remain against their wish; they are treated with every kindness and luxury the custom of the country allows, and every possible attention is paid to them in sickness.

LADY milliners were known in the Stuart period: the Duchess of Tyrconnell had "a stand of millinery in Exeter Change—then a fashionable place of resort." Also, it seems, she disguised herself by a mask, so as to hide her humbled pride, and eventually was punished off by James II., to save her family honour.

ANECDOTES of the Queen and theatrical matters, it is interesting to know that, while fully appreciating high art and tragic intensity, Her Majesty hugely enjoys comedy, and is plainly of the same mind as that other "player" who recently confessed with a deep sense of humiliation that he was "one of those absurd individuals who go to the theatre for pleasure."

SIR JAMES FERGUSON has probably served Her Majesty in more capacities than any man now living, and in all he has done good work. A distinguished soldier, whose bravery was conspicuous in the Crimea, and who was wounded at Inkerman, Sir James has since been Under Secretary for India and the Home Department, and has served as Governor of South Australia, New Zealand, and Bombay.

STRIPE silk tea-cloths are a novelty. Ladies can easily make these up themselves by buying the striped corah. But the prettiest of all are the flax thread-embroidered tea-cloths. The tints of the threads are so varied that the most beautiful effects can be produced. Soft blues, apricot, tints, yellows—they are all so bewitching it is difficult to choose in looking at a box of these threads. By sketching out a design, then veining the flowers and leaves and overcasting the edge, a pretty effect can be produced; but, better still, if you have the time, it is so darn the whole background with one tint.

STATISTICS.

A GALLON of water weighs ten pounds.

THE sun gives 600,000 times the light that a full moon does.

THREE-FOURTHS of the ships that go through the Suez Canal are British.

THE largest nugget of gold ever found weighed 2,020 ounces, and was worth £8 37s.

THE number of public lamp-lighted in England and Wales is somewhere about 800,000.

THE heron seldom flaps his wings at a rate of less than 120 to 150 times a minute. This is counting the downward strokes only, so that the bird's wings really make from 240 to 300 distinct movements a minute.

GEMS.

LIFE without love can be borne, but life without honour never.

GOOD temper is like a sunny day—it sheds its brightness on everything.

THE true grandeur of nations is in those qualities which constitute the true greatness of the individual.

A WEAK mind is like a microscope, which magnifies trifling things, but cannot receive great ones.

MANY a genius has been of slow growth. Oaks that flourish for a thousand years do not spring up into beauty, like a reed.

NO man can gauge the value, at this present critical time, of a steady stream of young men, flowing into all professions and all industries, who have learned resolutely to speak in a society such as ours: "I can't afford."

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

FRUIT COOKIES.—Two cups of sugar, one cup of butter, two cups of chopped raisins, two eggs, two tablespoonsful of sour milk, two teaspoonsful of cinnamon, one teaspoonful of nutmeg, cloves and soda. Bake same as other cookies.

FLOATING ISLAND.—Heat one quart of milk to near boiling; beat the yolks of four eggs, add one-half cup of sugar, mix these smooth with a cup of the warm milk, then add to the boiling milk and stir until it thickens. When cool, flavour and pour into a glass dish. Heap upon the top a meringue of the whites, beaten stiff with one-half cup of sugar. Cut bits of jelly over all.

AMERICAN SOUP.—Three quarters of a pound of peas, two onions, one teacup of tomatoes, one carrot, bit of turnip, quarter of a teaspoonful of soda, one teaspoonful of sugar, a good bone, ten breakfast cups full of water. A roast beef bone makes this soup good, or a knuckle of mutton. Put the bone on with the water, and the peas previously soaked for a few hours; add the soda and boil for one hour; add all the other things and boil for two hours; strain through a close strain add salt and pepper to taste. This will afford a very tasty and nutritious soup.

SPONGE CAKE.—Take one teaspoonful of sugar, one teaspoonful of flour, three eggs, quarter of a teaspoonful of carbonate of soda, half a teaspoonful of cream of tartar, one tablespoonful of water, quarter of a teaspoonful of essence of lemon. Put the sugar and eggs into a basin, and with a whisk or two of forks beat well for ten or fifteen minutes till it is a nice-smooth froth. Mix the carbonate of soda and cream of tartar carefully with the dry flour, and stir it in, then the water with the essence of lemon mixed. The flour must be very gently and carefully mixed. Put into a papered tin and bake in a moderate oven for about half an hour.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE Persians have a different name for every day in the month.

NO one can breathe at a greater height than seven miles from the earth.

THE island of Malta is the most densely populated spot on earth.

LIBRARIANS state that people read more in October than in any other month.

THERE is to be a competitive fast of sixty days by five men in New York.

EDISON states that very few people know the sound of their own voice.

A COVERING of cork has been discovered to give to water-pipes the best protection against frost. The pieces of cork are shaped like the staves of a barrel, and held in place around the water-pipe by wire.

A MAN inhales one pint of air at each breath. While standing, the adult respiration is twenty-two times per minute; while lying down, thirteen. To save your breath lie down.

TO protect yourself from suffocation by smoke when caught in a burning building, tie an unfolded wet silk handkerchief over the face. This excludes the smoke from the lungs, and permits free breathing.

A HOTEL in Hamburg has been built entirely of compressed wood, which by the pressure to which it is subjected is rendered as hard as iron, as well as absolutely proof against the attacks of fire.

THE best lighted, and perhaps the most beautiful, thoroughfare in the world is Berlin's chief street, Unter den Linden. It has four rows of lime-trees, extending from the royal palace to the Brandenburg gate, and is illuminated by three rows of electric lights.

THE value of the National Gallery pictures and building is about a million and a quarter sterling. The National Gallery was founded in 1824, with a collection of 53 pictures; it now contains about 1,200 pictures, which have cost roundly £1,000,000.

WHEN a CHINESE compositor sets a type, he places them in a wooden frame 22 by 15 inches. This frame has twenty-five grooves, each for a line of type, and the type rests in clay to the depth of a quarter of an inch. The type are of wood, perfectly square, and the compositor handles them with a pincers.

WHAT is called a patrixphone is a new electrical musical instrument invented by a Frenchman. It is made up of a series of bells of different tones. Each bell is placed between an electro magnet and an interrupter, and the bell itself thus becomes the medium of the electric current. The sounds produced are said to resemble those of an organ.

WHEN a man dies, in Sumatra his widow plants a post in front of her particular door in the family mansion and hangs a flag on it. Not until the wind has torn the flag to shreds can she accept a second lover's advances. What is wanted in Sumatra more than anything else is a material for flags that will be more susceptible to the action of the elements than anything they now have.

THE Japanese have the most perfect kindergarten system in the world. In fact, they originated this method of instructing by entertainment instead of by punishment inflicted. Their play apparatus for such purpose is elaborate, but all of it is adapted to the infant mind, which it is designed at once to amuse and to inform. The little ones of that nation even become somewhat interested in mathematics by seeing and feeling what a pretty thing a cone, a sphere, or a cylinder is when cut out of wood with a knife. They make outlines of solid figures out of straw, with green peas dried to hold the joints together, and for the instruction of the blind flat blocks are provided, with the Japanese characters raised upon them.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

BLONDES.—Blondes certainly have the fairest and thinnest skins.

MARY JANE.—An expert says that the average carpet is about one-fifth dust.

PROCRUSTINATION.—The longer you delay the more difficult will it be for you to prove your case.

HEARTSASE.—It is difficult to renovate scarlet morinos. They should be given to a practical dyer.

MYSTIFIED.—We do not believe in such people, and must decline to give you the information you require.

F. A. M.—It is impossible for us to form an idea as to the value of the property.

FLORA.—Propagate your ferns from "roots" or seedlings. You cannot "preserve the seed" or sow it.

CURLY LOCKER.—We have never heard that people with curly hair are doubtful. Where did you get the notion?

A LOVER OF THE "LONDON READER."—It may disappear with time, but you can do nothing to remove it.

PEARL.—Are you quite sure you have spelt it correctly? A letter makes such a difference. At present your meaning is not quite clear.

CONSTANT READER.—1. We have no knowledge of the lady's whereabouts, but, to the best of our belief, she is still alive. 2. The charge is one shilling and sixpence.

GOLD AND SILVER.—Silver runs at about 4s. and gold at about 44 per ounce; each has, of course, a "market" price.

TANNY.—The daily use of vinegar, or any acid, is not good. Acids injure the teeth, and often weaken the stomach.

DISAPPOINTED.—Your question should have been addressed to the editor of the periodical mentioned by you.

IN NEED OF ADVICE.—It would be dangerous to resort to any remedies, unless prescribed by a competent medical man.

MOLLY AND DOLLY.—Both young ladies are eminently pleasing and attractive in appearance. Both would be called pretty.

POETRY.—The poem of the "Fairy Queen" was written by Edmund Spenser. The "Hesperides" was written by Herrick.

DURCK.—Better enter a school for adults, or make some arrangements for private lessons with a competent person.

C. D.—The thing is impossible. Can only be enlisted in the United States. Recruits are seldom required, as the whole army is only 25,000 strong.

MAVEL.—We are not aware of any; in fact, we are not sure that we know what is wanted. "Specialist on hair" is an elastic phrase.

INQUIRER.—Candidates for Civil Service examinations must comply strictly with the rules published by the commissioners.

LADYHARD.—As a general rule, unless there are special reasons for the omission, the entire skin should be daily bathed with cold water.

SUBANK.—A costly gift on your part would not be advisable, except in return for one received. Ladies do not take the initiative in gifts.

A SUFFERER.—You had better consult a medical man. It is impossible for us to advise you without knowing more about the symptoms of your complaint.

ANCHER.—Nothing will permanently restore grey hair. There are many preparations advertised claiming to do so, but they are nothing less than hair-dyes.

L. T.—When lightning is unattended by thunder, it is simply because the lightning-clouds are so far off that the noise of the thunder is lost before it reaches the ear.

TOP.—The price paid for the "east-off" City of London liveries ranges from about £10 to £12, the latter only being given when the gold lace is abundant, and the wear and tear of the year is not so very apparent.

INQUIRITIVE.—The estimated war footing of the Russian army for this year—that is, the men she could put into the field—is 1,250,798 men of all ranks, with 5,093 guns.

PROPRIETY.—There is nothing improper in a young lady making a suitable present to her minister upon her leaving his chapel where she has attended regularly for several years.

J. BARTLETT.—You had better, in first instance, write to Colonial Office, Downing-street, London, S.W. You are assuming the existence of an official who probably does not exist at all.

FRANCIS.—All that the British Postmaster charges is postage for conveyance of the parcel. The United States Customs authorities charge Customs duties, with which the Postmaster has nothing to do.

TITO.—If a receipt were granted it would, no doubt, have to be stamped, but the postal authorities are not bound to grant receipts for post-cards and orders, and seldom go beyond the letter of their obligations.

KITTIE.—It is customary to hang bells around the necks of cattle in Switzerland, because they are allowed to roam at will among the mountains, and the sound of the bells tends to keep them together, and also to remind the herdsmen of their whereabouts. The leader of each herd has the largest and finest-toned bell.

NED.—Do you mean is there a special food for gold-fish? Yes, finely-minced raw beef or fish dropped into the water occasionally, mere crumbs of either; a few crumbs of sponge biscuit may be given occasionally.

PERPLEXED.—We cannot see that you have much to complain of. You do not appear to have been very shabbily treated, and you are both morally and legally bound to pay the debt. The Statute of Limitations does not apply in such a case.

HIGHLANDER.—You are rather under standard height, though over chest measurement, indicating a vigorous constitution, but we cannot say where you are likely to succeed in your application. It will have to be a try all round.

NOT QUITE SURE.—Swans are never otherwise designated than as male and female, although it would be quite proper to speak of them as cock and hen; the young are cygnets, from the Latin name of the natural order to which the swan belongs.

JACKO.—It would be altogether against the spirit of the Queen's Regulations for anyone not in the Queen's service to wear a military uniform or bear military rank. If the attention of the War Office is drawn to the matter it will very soon be rectified.

DONO.—Our advice, which is given about every second week, we think, is that as soon as a money-lender demands a fee for expenses or inquiries he should be dropped. He does not mean honest business. If he did, the interest he charges would cover all expenses.

TORSY.—A cold bath every morning is good for preserving the body in health and vigour; but some people cannot stand the shock, and to such it is injurious. It is in the brisk rubbing after the bath that the chief good lies, as it sets up a healthy action in the skin.

STUDIOUS.—Some persons three and four times twenty years of age have taught themselves Greek and Latin and other languages; but for every one of that kind there are hundreds who cannot master any language, even with all the assistance a teacher can give.

GOOD-BYE.

'Tis well, since thou hast wearied grown
Of words and smiles of mine,
That thou shouldst seek another who
Could charm that heart of thine.
Yet, fickle as I knew thou art,
I scarce will breathe a sigh,
Nor let a single tear-drop start,
But simply say, Good-bye!

In other years my smiles could please,
Thou hadst no wish to flee;
While others wandered where they would,
Thou wast content with me.
And yet I must not now recall
Those years, nor for them sigh,
For, fickle as I knew thou art,
'Tis best to say, Good-bye!

I only pray that she on whom
Thou now mayst choose to smile,
May know how fickle is thy heart,
And hold her own the while.
For soon, I doubt not, thou wilt tire,
And for some others sigh.
'Tis easy, if one loves thee not,
To simply say, Good-bye!

R. B.—If you can pay and won't pay you may, after a county court order, be sent to prison. If you have goods they may be distrained. If you have neither goods nor money you may be ordered to pay by instalments out of future earnings.

AFFLICTED ONE.—Bathing the nose with water in which there has been put a few drops of camphor is said to whiten it. But as redness of the nose usually results from some stomach trouble, it would be wise to search for the cause and get rid of it before you apply external remedies.

MADCAP.—1. The "chief" cause of children being deaf and dumb is their being born without the sense of hearing. They have what is called a "congenital defect." Some, however, are born with perfect auricular organs, which are subsequently ruined by disease. 2. Deaf-mutism is assuredly not hereditary.

SWEET JENNY.—1. Jenny is a synonym for Janet, and that again means little Jane; so both names have the same origin, but they are distinct names for all that. Jane can never be called Jenny, or Jenny Jane. 2. Maria has no doubt grown out of Mary, but it has no acknowledged connection with it.

BRADLEY.—Farmer is one of the very large class of names from occupations as baker, tailor, gardener, carpenter, smith, etc. These are not peculiar to any division of the United Kingdom, but some are more common in one division than another. Farmer is perhaps English, it is not in use in Scotland.

QUEEN OF DIAMONDS.—The Orloff (Russian) diamond, which weighs 194 carats, is the largest cut diamond in the world. Another very large stone, said to be a real diamond, is owned by the Rajah of Mattan, in Borneo, where it was found in 1760. It weighs 367 carats, and is probably the largest uncut diamond known.

WORRIED ANNE.—We very much regret to say we do not think there is any means of preventing the hairs from coming out of your goat-skin rug (which cannot have been properly preserved) or of eradicated the insects from your furniture. If we are to understand that there are moths under the cloth the only cure for that is to take off the cloth and renew the stuff.

ST. VITUS.—Vitus was a Sicilian martyred by Diocletian A.D. 303-313. He was made one of the fourteen "helpers in need" in the Roman Catholic calendar and canonized. Persons suffering from nervous diseases prayed to him, and St. Vitus's dance was originally a procession of men and women jumping along the roads to his chapel.

UNMORTDOX.—Rapid strides are being made in funeral reform, and the vulgar habit of wearing "deep" mourning is undoubtedly on the decrease. Whether we shall ever arrive at a stage when outward and visible signs of mourning are altogether dispensed with is more than doubtful, but we are unquestionably learning to have the courage of our opinions in these matters.

GARNET.—Garnets were called by the ancients car-buncles; and when cut round and flat, like a drop of tallow, they are still called by the same name. The dark red garnet is something like the ruby; but there are also black, brown, green, and yellow garnets. The most prized are the red and black. The best come from Ceylon, Pegu, and Greenland.

CHRISTINE.—You can renovate those little Union vells when they have lost their crispness by dipping them in weak maulage and water and stretching and pinning them to dry, in the way lace curtains are done. Of course, the vells are so cheap, and so much more apt to tear than to get limp, that one would never want to do this in town.

LIDE.—Do not attempt to clean your plush. If it is a good one give it to a cleaner. The way it is done is by rubbing it with a piece of plush just dampened, then when the dirt is removed facing up the pile again by passing the plush so as to let a little steam through it from the back, or laying a bit of damp cloth upon the back and putting a hot iron on that while a person holds the plush face downwards.

BARTON.—1. The British loss in the Russo-Turkish (better known as Crimean) War was about 3,500 killed or died of wounds, 4,244 died of cholera, of other diseases 16,000 men—total, 24,000 killed or died; 3,873 disabled. The war added £41,031,000 to the National Debt. The French lost about 63,000 men, Russia about half a million. 2. Russia paid nothing to Britain. She had to give up large provinces to Turkey.

IN A FIX.—Let the girl write at once, stating that on reconsideration of the matter she finds she really does not require the book, and cannot pay for it. The publishers will therefore oblige her by cancelling the order their canvasser badgered her into signing against her conviction. That is enough; but she must resolutely refuse to accept delivery, and need not heed threats addressed to her.

ANXIOUS LOTTIE.—To take grease out of white marble, apply a little pile of whiting or fuller's earth saturated with benzine, and allow it to stand some time. Or apply a mixture of two parts washing soda, one part pumice stone, and one part alkali, all first finely powdered and made into a paste with water; rub well over the marble, and finally wash off with soap and water.

DESIRIOUS TO KNOW.—1. Any acknowledgment of a debt, and a new promise to pay it, made either within the period or afterward, if in writing, as, for instance, in a letter to a creditor, renews the debt from the time of the payment, and makes it good again for the legal period, counted from the new promise. 2. A part payment makes a debt good again, as in the case of a new promise.

CURIOUSITY.—The bandmaster and bandmen of a regimental band are on the regimental strength, and draw daily pay. To attract competent men, it is necessary, however, for the officers to form a band fund, out of which the bandmaster and men are paid a considerable addition to their nominal pay. Receipts from engagements to play in public go to the band fund after payment of expenses.

UNCERTAINTY.—A parent is at liberty to send his child to a private school. If the School Board is dissatisfied with the quality of the teaching at that school the parent may be summoned under the Education Act, and it would be for the magistrate to decide if the child was or was not under efficient instruction. If not, the parent would be at liberty to choose another private school under similar conditions.

MARGUERITE.—The four kings were originally David, Alexander, Cyrus, and Charlemagne, representing the four great monarchies, while the queens were Argine, Esther, Judith, and Pallas, types of birth, piety, fortitude, and wisdom. Argine being an anagram of Regina. The knaves were either knights or servants to knights, but which is uncertain, though the former conjecture is the more probable, from the fact that on cards of an early date appear the names of knights.

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††† WE CANNOT UNDERTAKE TO RETURN REJECTED MANUSCRIPTS.

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